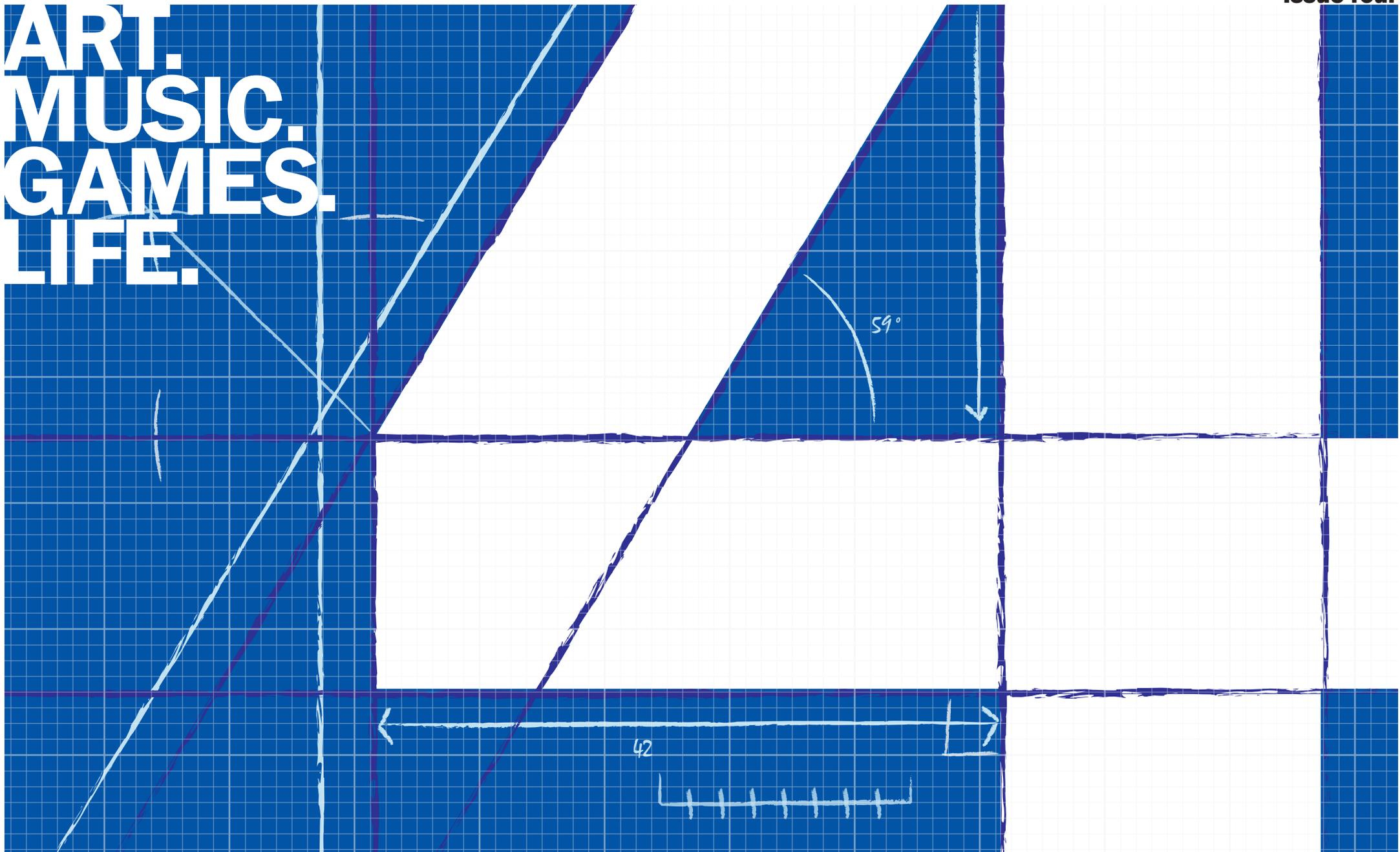


DISPOSABLE MEDIA

issue four

ART.
MUSIC.
GAMES.
LIFE.





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CHANGE IS GOOD.

So we've changed. We've not been around long, but we're doing ok. We think. But we've changed as we promised we would in issue 1 to reflect both what you asked for, and also what we want to do.

It's all part of a long term goal for the magazine which means there'll be more issues more often, as well as the new look and new content. You might have noticed we've got a new website as well; it'll be worth checking on a very frequent basis as we update it with DM news, and opinion. We've also gone and done the 'scene' thing and set up a MySpace page. It's work in progress at the moment, but in the future we're hoping it'll come to complement the magazine in various ways. Come be our friend at:

myspace.com/disposablemediamagazine

We'll leave you to have a look in the magazine in peace but as ever please get in touch with any comments or ideas.

We're all off to slag off Sony and come up with ideas for the speaker in the Wii-mote but hopefully we won't be too preoccupied to produce a new issue very soon.

- Ian.



//DISPOSED MEDIA

WELL, IT'S BEEN A WHILE SINCE THE LAST ISSUE. STUFF HAS HAPPENED. HERE'S WHAT, BRIEFLY...



//games

Lots of console news - Gizmondo, the console famed for failing has er...failed. And Stephen Ericsson (or some random, possibly fictional, German) has crashed the unpaid for (ie. stolen) Ferrari Enzo that the company helped buy him. Even better, the losses made on the console meant that even if they'd charged five grand for each console they wouldn't have made a profit. A five grand console isn't that mad - the way the new DSLite is

being lapped up suggests Nintendo could easily have sold them for that much.

Other consoles? You can go out and buy a 360 now, finally. And *Oblivion* might give you reason to. The PSP hasn't done much really, UMDs aren't selling but they were almost as bad an idea as the Gizmondo. Oh, and

there was a downloadable demo - thrilling stuff. The GameCube and Xbox are both silent. The PS3 is going to be more powerful than China and the Rev... isn't. Not going to be called the Revolution either... Console of the month award goes to the PS2 though with *Guitar Hero* because it's the most fun anything has ever been ever. More or less.



//music

The big news is either Take That and George Michael are both touring again - alcopops must have gone up. They've sold out anyway. Ditto Reading/Leeds. So they're all now readily available to buy elsewhere. It's a crazy world.

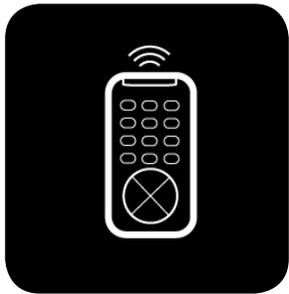


Pete Doherty arrested on the same day as getting charged. Blah. Keane release new song, complete with guitar sound made on a, er...keyboard. Guitars are rubbish, after all.

Except the one their bassist plays, obviously. *Gnarls Barkley* song gets to number one and is either ace or sounds like a Moby album track, depending on who you ask and people can't

remember if Moby is cool or not at the moment so they are finding that slightly scary and confusing. Has there been a pop-star-academy-fever-idol winner recently? Probably, but we lost track of them after that fat one.

And a bunch of good music comes out. But none of it made the news, so we won't mention it either. Can we mention *Guitar Hero* here too? Probably not.



//film & tv

Oscars came and went. Everybody makes a big fuss about *gay cowboys* winning and it promptly goes to race-relations flick *Crash*. Which everyone said would win ages ago, and now feel a bit silly for changing their minds. George Clooney knocks out a couple of crackers in *Goodnight and Good Luck* and *Syriana*, keeping the political commentaries

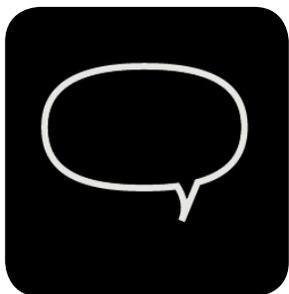


run going while grabbing a best supporting Oscar as a bonus.

Film distributors forget to release any decent films, so the cinema dies. Everyone and their polar bear sit at home waiting for *Lost Series 2* to download instead, until it starts showing on C4. The Internet then grinds to a halt as people obsess over numbers and conspiracies in it.

Everyone else raves about *My Name is Earl* because it's casually brilliant, while secretly loving *Beauty and the Geek* a bit more. Men look forward to staring at Audrey Tatou in *The Da Vinci Code*, while pretending to give a damn about Mary Magdalene.

None of which we actually watched as the TV was hogged by *Guitar Hero*.



//comics

Well, DC are still managing to hog the limelight, despite Marvel's best efforts. *Infinite Crisis* finally has a couple of deaths, required to make this big event legitimate. Neither will be missed since they weren't that popular, but never mind. The Detective Chimp (a chimp! and he's dressed like a detective!) is still kicking around the story, so

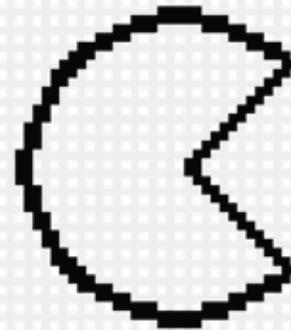
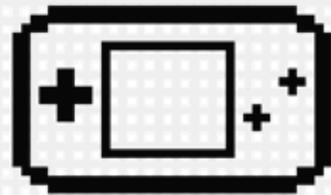


therefore it's ace. *52* is launching soon, hopefully to explain the slightly confusing *One Year Later* that started recently. But fifty two comics at two quid each means you'll have to spend over a hundred quid on it. It had better be good.

Marvel have realised that *House of M* was a bit rubbish so they're trying another big event. This time it's a

Civil War between super-hero's brought on by some secretive behaviour. It has plenty of opportunity to go wrong, but it sounds like a fun concept. If they make monkeys dress in deerstalkers they could be onto a winner.

There is literally no link between any of the above and *Guitar Hero*, so we won't mention it.



games



currently playing ...

ico / shadow of the colossus / shoot the bullet / user created games / monkey island

Last weekend. A boring Saturday, spent tidying and decorating. Sunday morning was spent failing to find games at a freezing boot-sale and then wandering around a town centre, buying *New Zealand Story* and *Battle Outrun* for a quid each and a games magazine for much more than that and then home in time for lunch.

The rest of the day is spent variously discussing what other people got at freezing boot-sales, reading the magazine, writing a games review and general *DM* organisation. Quite a gaming based day really.

Apart from a complete lack of game playing.



REV SAYS...

...YOU'RE NOTHING SPECIAL DM EDITOR ANDREW REVELL ASKS WHAT IS WRONG WITH WHINGING ARROGANCE IF IT HAS A POINT?

Not even a quick fiddle with musical plankton.

Sure, doing that much gaming stuff in one day is rare, but the trend of spending more time doing gaming related things than spent actually playing games does seem to be happening more and more. I'm sure it's not just me either. Since last year, how many games have you bought and never even tried? How few of them have you completed? And in the same time how many hours have you spent reading magazines, blogs, forums and websites about the games you aren't playing?

Anyone with an odd feeling of guilt reading this is who I'm talking about. You probably used to spend hours thoroughly playing hundreds of games but just don't any more, for a million

reasons. Gaming's annoyances, boring clichés and things that never change or maybe real life has just moved on? Whatever the reason it's perfectly reasonable.

That isn't happening though, people aren't moving away from gaming. They keep to the periphery, reading about games, speculating and hunting around to buy them cheap but never actually bothering to play them. It seems to be happening more often too. But why? Why not just wash their hands of it and go and watch more films or whatever?

Here is the theory. The Playstation changed gaming to a huge extent and so many people ended up owning one that by the time the PS2 came out saying you played videogames was no longer anything special - it had become as much of a none-statement as saying you watch films or listen to music. Being a gamer

is no longer interesting, unique or quirky. It's no longer intrinsically linked to what kind of person you are. It's just something fun to pass the time and nothing more.

Yes, before it was different. Disparaging looks from offended Aunts when they find out the fiver they sent was spent on a

game not a book. Scoffs from people who thought they were great for being above such things. This just in - the Aunt is dead and the scoffer owns a PS2.

Gamers enjoyed it though; deep down being different was fun. They've grown up with games, they've loved games, they've learnt things from them and met people because of them. Now they've lost interest in them though, they've found that they can keep that part of them alive by reading about them. By picking up rare bargains and showing off. By whinging with strangers online about European release schedules. Even better, as well as keeping the pretence of being a gamer up, they also get to differentiate themselves from people just wandering into Game and buying the latest release.

Free world and everything, but that is a complete waste of time and you should start making a decision. Go and sit in front of your games collection and find the ones you've been meaning to play but haven't. Either play them properly, at least get close to completing them. Or sell them and stop pretending. You can keep the ones you love and play, *Singstar* for parties and *Pro Evo* for quiet nights or whatever but get rid of the rest because being a fake gamer earns you nothing. You're not different because you're a gamer or some kind of gamer-hybrid. Literally no-one cares.

My pile of games to play is sat by the TV now for the record.

"PEOPLE AREN'T MOVING AWAY FROM GAMING. THEY KEEP TO THE PERIPHERY, READING ABOUT GAMES, SPECULATING AND HUNTING AROUND TO BUY THEM CHEAP BUT NEVER ACTUALLY BOTHERING TO PLAY THEM!"



“I’ve seen things you people wouldn’t believe. Attack ships on fire off the shoulder of Orion. I watched C-beams glitter in the dark near the Tannhauser gate. All those moments will be lost in time, like tears in rain.”

Videogames, and their production, are not like films. Put simply, a game allows you to interact as much or as little as the designer has permitted, while a film forces you to just sit and watch. Alongside their differences at the end-user level, there exist the differences to the producers. When you make a film, you pick up your video camera and go outside: choosing real locations; actual, physical shots that work. When you make a game,



WISHLIST

**ADAM PARKER TELLS US
WHAT HE WOULD WISH FOR
TO MAKE GAMING BETTER
WISH THREE:
SIMPLIFIED GAME CREATION**

although the artistic inputs may come from a variety of sources, the blood that gives the beast life is within a computer, in lines of code.

With this in mind: it must, therefore, be possible to produce a completely intuitive games creation program, offering infinite artistic and thematic possibilities to a games designer, but with the minimum level of input required, all from the safety of your computer.

Picture it: a hastily scribbled note on a piece of paper. In the right hands, it could become the design for the next *Tetris*, or *Deus Ex*. In the wrong hands, or hands not equipped with a simple enough games creation tool, it would likely be lost,

**“IT MUST BE POSSIBLE TO CREATE
A COMPLETELY INTUITIVE GAMES
CREATION PROGRAM; POTENTIAL
DESIGNER’S MOMENTS NEED
NOT BE LOST ANY LONGER”**

one of presumably many instances where the games industry has lost out on a fresh idea through the sheer alienation of fresh blood.

The work of hundreds, if not thousands, of designers, programmers, artists, producers, executive producers, scriptwriters, testers and anyone else currently needed to make a big budget game; all of their work could perceivably be done by one lone designer and a simple games creation tool. The bedroom coder would return. There’d be strikes and riots, sure, but if the lessons of past media revolutions (such as the diminished influence of unions on the press) have taught us anything, it’s that the individual is truly empowered.

Indeed, such an intuitive design resource may transcend mediums: when photorealism is finally upon us; perhaps even films will be created in this way,

with a similarly reduced need for the directors, producers and actors. Will a socially retarded shut-in from Staines one day win headlines and an Oscar for his production of a beautiful period piece and the portrayal of a young lady entering womanhood in feudal England? Perhaps. We are already seeing games used as a means for films production through the technique of

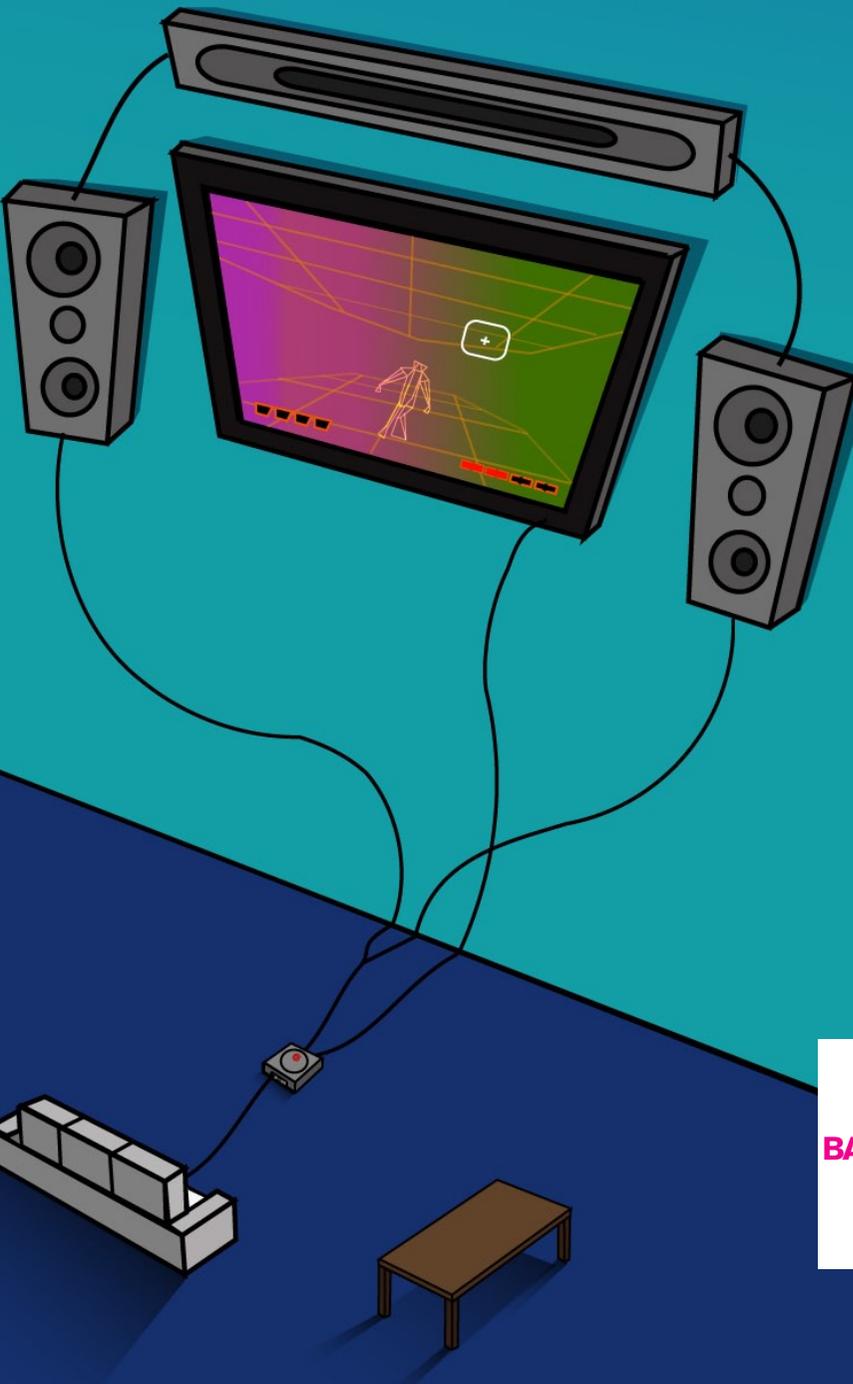
‘machinima’. Despite the limited capabilities of such a method, the lower costs and production times are a real advantage over real world film manufacture, and this is an area of film making which can only improve over time.

This all could, of course, work hand in hand with the ‘documentation of everything’ discussed in the last Wish List column. The models of milk cartons and golf clubs and trees and people could all be archived for use in the next game or film using this technology, saving a great deal of time, if stunting creative vision a little.

Already, our culture is, to some extent, broadly linked by ideas and goals through their delivery in the media. The emergence of such an all-encompassing media creation tool heralds some serious questions, however. Are we facing a stagnation of ideas through this cultural convergence? Is the copy and paste nature of such a resource going to result in the dilution of originality in our art?

Perhaps the ends outweigh the means, and the easy and increased introduction of fresh ideas can excuse an identikit art direction or physics system from another well-known title.

As, hopefully, the *Blade Runner* quote at the start of this article conveyed, the potential games designer’s moments need not be “lost in time, like tears in the rain” any longer.



This day has been four months in the making, ever since I gave my brother my Dreamcast VGA box for Christmas. I never thought I could be overwhelmed by an episode of *Neighbours*, but here I sit and it's all too much for me. Unfortunately for bishop and co. it's not a star turn or the internal torment of bouncers dream that's making me feel this way, it's because, on a sofa, about 7 feet away from a 50inch plasma television, it's all too much to take in.

I'm excited about this, years of blade runner



GAMER'S DIARY

A GLIMPSE OF THE FUTURE VIA THE PAST, AS OLD CONSOLE MEETS NEW TV (WE'RE OBVIOUSLY PAYING JASON ROBBINS FAR TOO MUCH)

sci-fi has told us of the future of displays, bigger, flatter, brighter, more detailed and here we are, big, bright and thin enough to pincer your hand around. I've brought my modded xbox along to fire up *Coast 2 Coast* which I fully anticipate to be a wholly wonderful experience. The console is fired up and after some fiddling about around the back we get a picture. No sound. The cabling around the back is fearsome, TV, surround amp, SCART switcher, sky box, and scaler, all vying for attention

"A QUICK POKE OF THE POWER BUTTON, THE XBOX IS YANKED OFF THE UNIT AND BACK IN MY BAG, ANOTHER POKE AND A LITTLE ORANGE TRIANGLE INITIATES SOMETHING VERY SPECIAL, THE TRUE GLORY OF THE SCREEN!"

from all channels. The audio cable has disappeared into the sky box and is too entangled to bother moving. That's okay; we'll just fire up the game and put some music on instead. I'm counting the beeps in my head, GO! Starting in second gear the car lurches forward and I make a dive for the gap in the palm trees, smash! Bounce off; accelerate down the road, bump, wobble, bump wobble, what the hells going on? I'm supposed to be good at this. The scaler, which is used for

gaining an optimum image for the screen is processing the Xbox visuals causing a slight delay, you exit a slide and slightly overcompensate, as the car swings to and fro you keep touching the stick but the delay means you're actually making it worse. I'm sat here in front of a £3,000 TV and I'm having to play a game with no sound and an unplayable control delay, great.

A complete disaster it could've been, but the real gaming event I came for is yet to be unleashed. A quick poke of the power button, the xbox is yanked off the unit and back in my bag, another poke and a little orange triangle initiates something very special, the true glory of the screen. The volume is cranked up and crisp VGA visuals cut into your retinas as the slatted man throbs into view. *Rez* has arrived. The hard edged polygon-embracing nature of its visuals are made for the Dreamcast, and the Dreamcast has been patiently waiting for technology to catch up. Only now can we truly do justice to the world it pumps out before your eyes. Stare in awe at the colossal man as he strides down a yellow corridor so pure and primary your irises turn to pinholes, feel the onslaught of the code breaking segments as they move towards you, overbearing and filling your vision. Tales of synesthesia have never been so heartfelt. The full vision of the Dreamcast now shines.



“IT’S THE LOOK OF IT. IT’S LIKE AN INTERACTIVE ESCHER PAINTING, WITHOUT THE SENSATION OF WANTING TO KICK FUCK OUT OF ESCHER FOR SHOWING OFF!”

An advertising exec is in his office, right? He’s having a meeting with some big-time rep from a fashionable clothes store. A big rich fat shite sweating in a suit that wasn’t bought from George in Asda, where we get ours. The clothing retailer’s looking for a new, cool ad campaign. Something that re-brands the store, something with a unique feel. You know what these pricks are like, right? You can picture them.

Mr. Advertising Exec pulls a dustsheet off of an arcade cabinet. He powers it up. There is a tinkle. A glassy sound. It’s almost silence. It’s hardly music. The images on the screen are all clean



BIGLIME

MARIO WOOING PEACH IN HIS NEW LEVIS? SONIC CHARGING ABOUT COLLECTING MARS BARS BEFORE THE CORRIE THEME-TUNE KICKS IN? IF ONLY BIGLIME HAD GONE INTO ADVERTISING...”

angles, rounded objects, form suspended within a nothingness. Floating on style alone, almost.

It’s *Marble Madness*. The clothes store rep doesn’t know what to say. He didn’t know there was anything so otherworldly. He falls off his chair. His trousers fall down. The aftershock of the otherworldliness blows him out of his shoes and through the window. To his death.

This scenario wouldn’t happen, of course. Games still haven’t crossed over enough to allow for any meaningful referential influence over non-gaming product. Oh, and films don’t count. Every film that’s been based on a video game has been a cop-out, a half-arsed attempt at capturing the

essence of the virtual world. Like when Jackie Chan or Chow Yun Fat star in a Hollywood movie, and the producers feel compelled to team them up with someone Western, someone safe? The same thing. Temper the virtual world with a healthy measure of reality. Don’t panic the viewers. If they’re going to show you Pyramid Head, they’ll show you Sean Bean too. Don’t panic folks, here’s Sharpe. Here’s big Boromir out of that poofy Elf shite.

How great would it be to see an advert on TV and recognise the influence of something like *Marble Madness*? There’s no real reason to think that it wouldn’t strike a chord with non-gamers. It’s not just the gameplay of *Marble Madness* that tugs at you. It’s the look of it. It’s like an interactive Escher painting, without

the sensation of wanting to kick fuck out of Escher for showing off. If some American nut who claimed to have had a near-death experience told you it looked just like *Marble Madness*, you’d believe it. Unless the American nut in question was Angelina Jolie, in which case you wouldn’t give a fuck about the believing and just get with the receiving*. But, yes, *Marble*

Madness. There’s nothing else quite like it. It’s so special it’s been italicised every time I’ve mentioned it. And that’s without saying anything about how the game sounds. Twackly-inkle-inkle-inkle-bee-bee-bee. Something like that, probably. By accident or design, it’s a perfect collision of beautiful and strange. So beautiful and strange that when God crafted the Kiwi Fruit, you can bet he said “This is almost as beautiful and strange as *Marble Madness*. In italics.”

So, what’s taking the pop-culture plunder of videogame history so long?

Why can’t I buy a Crystal Castles Happy Meal? Why can’t I buy my sisters big black dildos with the word “*Tempest!*” printed on them in a slick vector-style design? These rich advertising and marketing money-people are crazy. They’re not exploiting the industry enough. We should write letters, really.

“Dear Faceless Beer Manufacturer, if you were to run an advert showing lori from *King of Fighters* swallowing a jar of your best, we’d all go out and get smashed tomorrow.”

Oh, and a quick P.S.

“Throw in that bouncing sound effect from *Gribbly’s Day Out* on the C64 as well, and we’ll buy shares.”

*Blowjobs, naturally.

WE WII

NINTENDO HAS CHANGED THE NAME OF THE REVOLUTION. AS OF APRIL TWENTY SIXTH IT IS NOW THE NINTENDO WII, PRONOUNCED 'WE'

WORDS AND DESIGN: ANDREW REVELL

That isn't a leak or a rumour. It's official. Keeping it quiet must have left Nintendo staff bursting to tell someone, but somehow they kept it in until the right moment. Aside from the community aspect of the name, the 'ii' is meant to represent the Wii Controller (WC). This makes the WC the first thing you think of when people talk about wanting a Wii. This careful planning is what Nintendo are hoping will make them the Number 1.

Even before a release date is announced, Nintendo fans are already saving their pennies, ready to spend them on release day. When that day comes, the fans sat outside stores will have one thing on their mind - how much they need a Wii. With E3 approaching, hopefully the trickle of information will become a steady flow. There is also of course the hope that their will be a video stream of Wii information, showing Nintendo talk about their Wii in public for the first time, assuming nerves don't kick in.

Yes. We are taking the piss. Slowly but surely everyone will get used to it and of course the machine looks as good as ever. Especially the tennis in WiiSports. But is it really worth risking flushing away the success of the DS with a silly name? Probably not.



wii™

And now for something slightly different: whilst searching for goodness knows what, *DM's* resident freeware fan Ozimod came across news of a new game by *Perfect Cherry Blossom* creators Shanghai Alice, a game with quite an intriguing core concept.

The game is *Shoot The Bullet* and the concept is as follows: In short, it's all about photography; something which seems alien to all gamers except hardcore *Pokémon Snap* players. When you play the game, you realise that the "shoot" in the title isn't talking about firing bullets: rather, it's about a photo shoot. When the player presses fire, a frame appears onscreen and begins to shrink as it focuses.

Upon releasing fire, the contents of the frame are captured in a photograph, all bullets in the frame disappear, and if the enemy is in the frame (the game pacing is in a boss rush format, so it's one enemy per level) the photo is stored in a collection on the side of the screen. Fill the collection with the required amount of photos and the enemy dies.

Having discovered said game, it was inevitable that a search for information on the game's release would begin. However, fellow contacts said that there was little news of the game's current status in terms of development; information that was contradicted when community sites were found, filled with comments about the game and what it's like to play. I wasn't about to give up, and after much browsing (and translating) web pages for information, I finally got a chance to play the game.

YOU REALISE THAT THE "SHOOT" IN THE TITLE ISN'T TALKING ABOUT FIRING BULLETS.

Firing up the application, you are presented with the typically tidy layout and smart presentation any *Cherry Blossom* player will be familiar with, and then you go into the game proper to discover that the boss rush format seems to work perfectly with the photographic formula: the lens manipulation is too meandering to deal with waves of little enemies, and so you learn how it is used to deal with each level's single enemy. Slow, focused zooms on the enemy are essential for completion of the level, but put you at risk of getting hit by the enemy's bullets (like *Cherry Blossom*, the hitbox is very generous.) Meanwhile, quick massive shots clear the screen full of bullets, but then it seems wasted: as you recharge, the screen will quickly fill again.

In addition to taking pictures, a second button can slow you down and also be used in conjunction with the first button to speed up the recharging of your weapon. An experienced *Shoot The Bullet* player, therefore, will learn to do quick charges after every photograph so as to get an efficient kill. For such a simple and ingenious spin on the shoot 'em up formula, *Shoot The Bullet's* camera gimmick holds a surprising amount of depth, and there are many different strategies to use on enemies.

Whilst not perfect - some might find it too difficult or too repetitive, and I was disappointed that there wasn't a photo saver - it's a very unique concept compared to the straightforward *Cherry Blossom* or *Cho's* spins on traditional formulae. Here's hoping it reaches a wider audience...

SHOOT THE BULLET

OUR FREWARE CORRESPONDENT IS USED TO TAKING PICTURES OF BULLET HELL. NOW IT'S EVEN MORE OF A NECESSITY. WISH YOU WERE HERE...



SHOOT THE BULLET'S CAMERA GIMMICK HOLDS A SURPRISING AMOUNT OF DEPTH



DIY DEVELOPMENT

A FEATURE IN WHICH DM ASKS -
WHO KNOWS MORE ABOUT GAME DESIGN:
THE DESIGNERS, OR THE GAMERS?

WORDS: DAN GASSIS

DESIGN: ANDREW CAMPBELL

So you're sat at your PC, a large stack of commercial games on one side of the desk, an open magazine on the other. Not one of the boxed games is being played. A glance at the monitor shows that the game you're engaging at the moment is nothing like

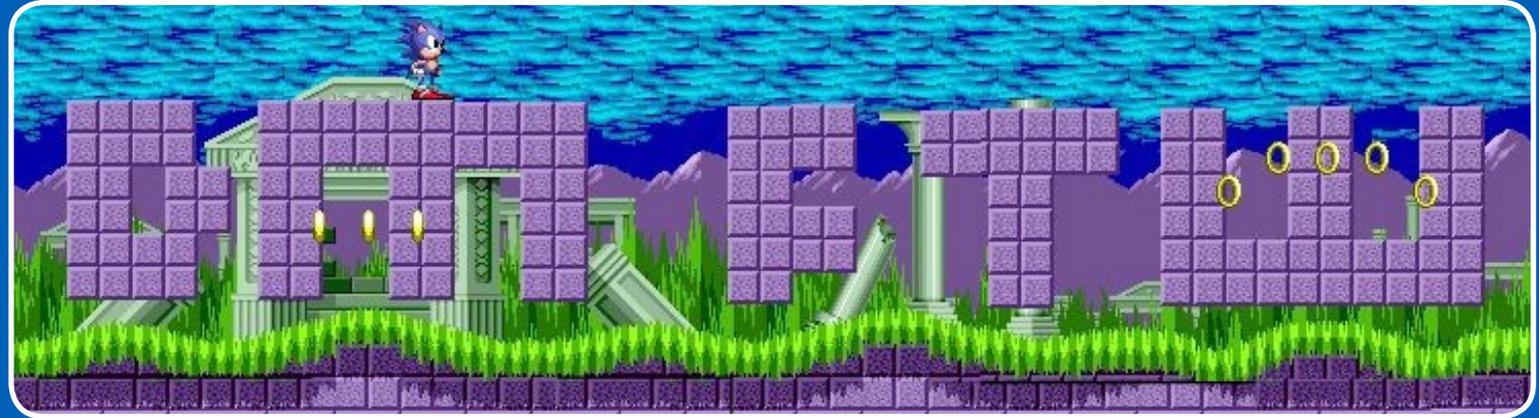
the activities promoted by the titles that you have purchased, since it is a game downloaded for free, thanks to the magazine's details. But is it really worth keeping an interest in user-created content?

This follower of freeware and homebrew

(not to mention an avid fan of creating games himself) believes so. For the developers of the games, it can be incredibly satisfying to create something that's entirely your own work and is as enjoyable as some commercial developments. DIY developers create content not just for online attention, but for their own personal enjoyment. These people are control freaks: they can be delighted in the way that a game's framework can be bent to their will. They're scientists: setting up experiments of cause and effect to see if new game mechanics can be discovered. They are some of the most potentially interesting developers of electronic entertainment, and they create their software for fun.

And it's this - freedom of expression - that makes user-created content so desirable. Sure, there's the small issue of most homebrew developments being free, which also undoubtedly helps boost desirability of the titles, but personally, the main thing that keeps me coming back to homebrew news sites is the way in which these

developers aren't bound by the desires of a slack-jawed clueless money-grabbing publisher. For those who are new to the internet, looking at what is on offer from these developers can be quite overwhelming, since everyone has different ideas that they have developed into downloadable products.



“THESE DEVELOPERS AREN'T BOUND BY THE DESIRES OF A SLACK-JAWED CLUELESS MONEY-GRABBING PUBLISHER!”

This is why it's good to keep track of what's being developed.

Take an engine as elastic as the one found in Quake 3 Arena (Activision, 1998), for example, and you can find modifications that are able to turn the game into a rally race, a slow-motion John Woo-style experience, a Speedball-esque sports game, an aerial combat quasi-simulator, a Counter-Strike style experience, a colourful, abstract reimagining of the gameworld, an overly excessive bloodbath, a more statistical game, a fantasy RPG-style world and more besides. The flexibility of the game's engine has even made people purchase the game on the strength of modding potential alone (although this is a risky move as you never know how well a community will blossom around your game and it's tools.) Similarly,

freeware and shareware games mean that your PC software range is not limited to RTS/RPG/FPS/simulations, but shmups, fighting games, platformers, console remakes, arcade racers and puzzle games. Suddenly the outsiders are beginning to take notice...

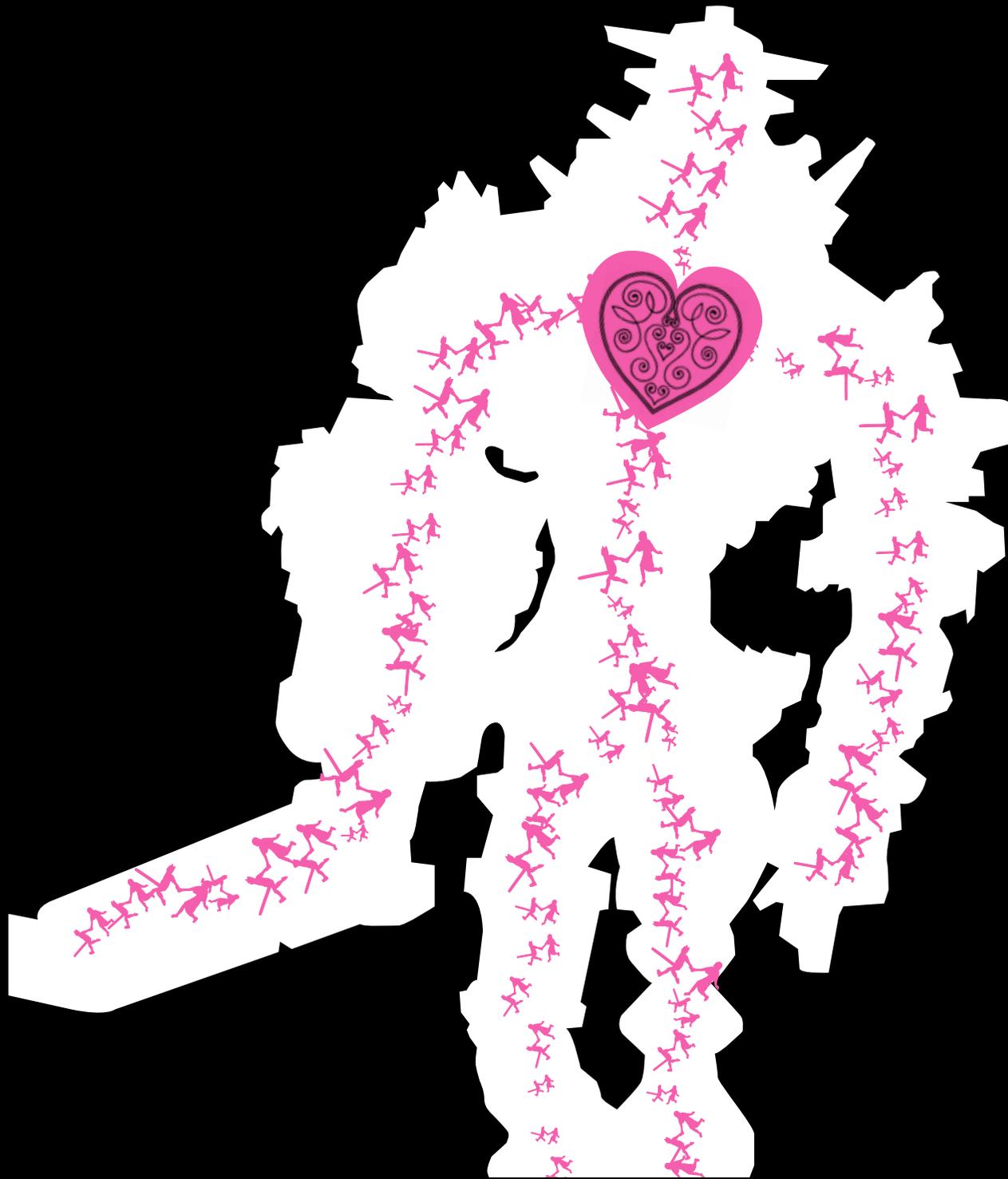
Despite the dangers of developing a shallow game in a flexible engine, risks are something that don't bother homebrew developers, and I believe that this lack of risk-aversion is what makes freeware, shareware and mod-based games so enjoyable. People worry that Platform Game X won't sell on the PC? If that's the case, why have I been playing the shareware ArcadeLab platformer "Superstar Chefs" more than any of my FPSes recently? People whine and bitch about how emulation's evil, but it's proof that people play platformers, beat 'em ups et al on the PC. Why don't commercial developers take a look at the homebrewers and emulator developers and see that maybe the odd risk on a forgotten genre might be worthwhile? People don't even have to have low expectations anymore - don't expect too much, it's only a homebrew game - because homebrewers

reinvigorate the genres that commercial developers may be killing.

Why the murder though? Maybe they don't think it's practical to adopt the scattershot nature of DIY developers; after all, the homebrewers usually aren't that bothered if they don't get that many downloads, whereas a commercial developer would rather invest in something that sells, something practical, and this is why there is little chance of user-created goods penetrating the mainstream: there are simply too many consumers who never look for freeware or shareware, who buy all their games from retail stores.

In fact, these gamers - if they were introduced to freeware and shareware - would merely wonder why people take an interest in little arcade games that don't have ATI-powered pixel-shaded bump-mapping brilliance at every corner. A little research, however, would show them that homebrew developers take great pride in publishing a popular title that they can call their own; or that homebrew fans take great interest in titles developed by people who aren't working with a demographic, technology, or fashion in mind. And that is why DIY development is so exciting.





THY NEXT FOE IS...

WORDS: ANDREW REVELL DESIGN: PETER WRIGHT

CREATING A FOLLOW UP TO ONE OF THE MOST SIGNIFICANT GAMES IN RECENT YEARS ON A CONSOLE GETTING ON FOR FIVE YEARS OLD WAS NEVER GOING TO BE AN EASY TASK BUT ONE THAT EVERYONE WAS LOOKING FORWARD TO SEEING THE FRUITS OF. DID THEY SUCCEED?



Ico is a game with a history. From the initial positive, although not glowing, reviews it steadily sold copies from a small print run and eventually crawled to becoming a sell-out. Somewhere along the line though all hell broke loose. Word of mouth pushed the game like nothing before it. People used it as tools in arguments, whether it was to say the PS2 was “best” or to argue that games could be art when they tried hard enough. Whatever the reason, it piqued peoples interest and made them want to play it. Enough to make the game sell for quite ridiculous amounts on eBay, easily up to sixty pounds. Enough to make Sony re-release it now that it’s follow-up has arrived.

It’s not hard to work out how it got pushed though. From the opening scene to the closing scene it feels different. The fact there is nothing cluttering up the screen. The animation and the architecture. Boil the gameplay down and it was just a third person platformer with some monsters to hit with a sword and a girl to protect but it excelled above that so much.

It was beautiful and clever enough to realise that beauty isn’t just about pushing polygons. A game worth the exorbitant prices it got pushed to just to see a boy holding a girl by the hand and running.

Releasing a follow-up was never going to be a simple task. Shadow of the Colossus is that game and it is magnificent. It is magnificent in its attention to detail and careful animation of even the smallest creature and it is magnificent in its scale, from the vast area to roam around to each and every Colossus. Huge, awe-inspiring creatures that are worth staring at, especially when you realise a humble PS2 is pushing it all along. So why would you want to kill them? To bring a young girl back from the dead. She’s someone worth going to the effort of doing that for.

So how do you do it? Get on a horse, follow some light and get to a Colossus. Fire some arrows at it to annoy it. Jump on it in a cunning way; dangle for a bit, find a place to stab it a few times, get thrown off and watch the dumb thing let you do it again and again until it is dead. Get sent back to the temple, get on your horse, and follow some light. When you’ve done that sixteen times, do a few other final bits and that’s it. You’re done.

Exploring the vast area available to you is tempting, but isn’t really that worthwhile.

Aside from finding some fruit or lizards to shoot and eat you will very quickly start spotting parts of the game placed for colossus battles, which are of course entirely deserted until you come to the right time. And finding them spoils some of the fun of discovering them when you should do. The story won’t push you along either - most is explained in the opening cut-scene, the rest in the closing cut-scene with nothing in-between apart from your own speculation. The controls are a bit awkward as well.

Is looking at it like this wrong? Maybe. It’s a game you’ve got to be tolerant of, it’s something to admire and it’s something to appreciate. Acknowledge how difficult it is to animate a horse that well. Admire it when it comes to a galloping stop near you. Ignore the fact that the reason it was so far behind was because you jumped off a cliff as a lazy shortcut since you knew you wouldn’t die thanks to the ill-suited recharging health bar. In fact ignore the fact you have a health bar and grip-o-meter entirely since they make the game look so much more clumsy than its predecessor.

If you start playing the game in the wrong frame of mind you’ll notice the flaws, graphical glitches and occasionally dodgy cameras. You’ll realise how much better it would have been as a PS3 launch game. You’ll compare the individual aspects to other games and criticise it for what it hasn’t got. Ignore that and you’ll find it easy to love. You’ll get caught up in it. You won’t question it. You’ll play it from start to finish and then you’ll do it again.

So why is it so easy to love? It’s because the developers clearly filled it with love. They thought about it, committed to a vision of a game and then tried their best to achieve it. They designed every aspect. Gave it an art style and carefully considered the colour palette and made it all work together perfectly right down to the packaging. That passion and consideration are what make the game stand out and are the reason to try and ignore flaws. If all games were treated this well Shadow of the Colossus might be little more than a footnote in gaming history, but things are this is one of the most significant games on the PS2.

Almost as significant as Ico, in fact.

MONKEY ISLAND

WELCOME TO A WORLD OF RUBBER CHICKENS AND TERRIFYING PARROTS

WORDS: ANDREW REVELL
DESIGN: MELANIE CAINE

The one thing that links all good retro games is that they don't feel like retro games. Give them a lick of paint on their aging graphics and put them back on the shelves and they'd sell without the need for nostalgia, they're good enough to hold their own against anything released since.

If ever there was proof of that then Monkey Island is it. It's got everything that any modern game would need - interesting character design, a brilliant story and a selling point that's easy to explain. It's a funny game you complete by solving puzzles.

You're Guybrush Threepwood, a wannabe pirate. Three expert pirates who are trapped ashore tell you the only way to get started is to pass some tests - dig up some treasure, learn to swordfight and pinch an idol from the mayor. The latter poses a problem though when a Sheriff gets involved and you fall in love with the mayor. Who then gets kidnapped by a ghost pirate leading you to try and rescue her from the forbidden island complete with dangerous vegetarian cannibals which you can only reach with your newly formed and incredibly lazy crew and a magic potion. Then

try and get back before the wedding. It's a bit silly.

While the story might be a little daft, Monkey Island is a hugely funny game. From a self-aware joke based around the interface documenting an off-screen fight-scene to subtle throwaway jokes the humour is totally consistent. From the opening blind watchman to the ghost killing root beer at the end the humour has the same tone and same logic meaning that if you loved the first ten minutes you'll love it until it tells you to go to bed. It all carries over into the puzzles too and apart from a couple of instances - such as bartering for a ship - the tone of the game guides you towards the right answer. In any other game it wouldn't be obvious that you

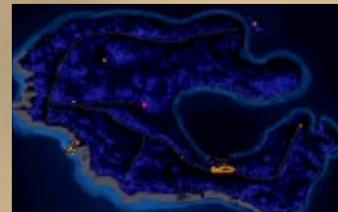
needed to wear a saucepan on your head but it's something you'll work out pretty much instantly here. Consistency, good game design and a brilliant script is what makes Monkey Island.

For a while Monkey Island was just one of a series of brilliant point and click adventures being released. Day of the Tentacle, Sam and Max and so on all gave each other a good run for their money but things started to go downhill with the jump to 3D being particularly

to blame. The leap from lazy and thoughtful gameplay to needing constant manoeuvring of characters quickly turned people off and the genre was dead, with Monkey Island 4 more or less marking the death. If simple graphics and thoughtful gameplay works for Football Manager, surely a sumptuous 2D point and click adventure can work too? We'll probably never find out.

At least funny games are still coming out in dribs and drabs, Psychonauts recently - from the creator of the fantastic Grim Fandango - and before that Armed and Dangerous had it's moments too but there is hardly a regular supply. Humour is presumably another one of those things that someone, somewhere has decided doesn't sell - we much prefer brooding and emotional apparently.

In fact, since point and click games and games with humour in them don't sell, maybe the opening paragraph was wrong. Maybe a gorgeous version of Monkey Island with nothing else changed wouldn't sell at all. Nah, of course it would. It's fantastic.





STREET FIGHTER: ANNIVERSARY COLLECTION (XBOX)

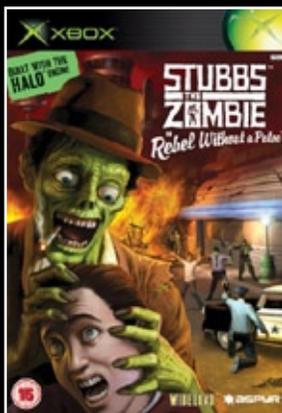
This collection has more than enough content to satisfy a fan of the series: as deep as it is accessible, the main attraction on the disc is 3rd Strike; it marries traditionally fast-paced SF gameplay with countermeasures such as blocking, parrying and dodging, creating a much deeper game, and the System Direction options allows the player to customise all kinds of in-game mechanics. Also included is Hyper Street Fighter II; not quite as fluid as 3rd Strike but certainly sharing the attention to detail and depth of that game. It's a perfect

inclusion for the nostalgics who find 3rd Strike a little too complex (or fast) for their liking. And then once you've played SFII you can watch the animated movie based on the game, which seemed a little corny for my liking but still enjoyable. Throw in support for Xbox Live and you're left with a very generous disc.

Dan Gaissis



"MARRIES TRADITIONALLY FAST-PACED SF GAMEPLAY WITH COUNTERMEASURES, CREATING A MUCH DEEPER GAME"



STUBBS THE ZOMBIE IN REBEL WITHOUT A PULSE (XBOX)

After years of decapitation, being shot through the head and general mistreatment, it seems that the video game zombie is mad as hell and isn't going to take it any more. Stubbs the Zombie in Rebel Without a Pulse sees the player inhabit the decaying body of a recently deceased travelling salesman in a third person action adventure built using the Halo engine. While it's tremendous fun to munch brains and command a small army of mindless, shambling undead people, it is pretty simplistic with little to do beyond repeatedly pressing

one button to attack and another to eat brains. The visuals are also rather ugly – unsurprising given that the Halo engine is now quite geriatric in video game terms. Audio is very satisfying, with a great pseudo-1950s soundtrack and nicely squelchy sound effects. Stubbs is lots of fun, and the anachronistic retro-futuristic setting certainly adds to its quirky charms

Jason M. Brown



"THE ANACHRONISTIC RETRO-FUTURISTIC SETTING CERTAINLY ADDS TO ITS QUIRKY CHARMS:"



NEW STAR SOCCER 3

(PC)

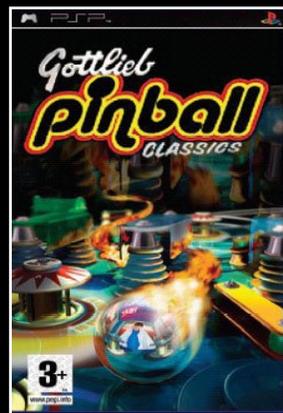
Finally someone has realised that it would actually be fun to play as a single member of a team. Moving into space, staying inside, timing runs and bagging hat-tricks, it's great stuff. Not only that but you manage your whole career, from mini-games to improve your abilities, negotiating sponsor deals to getting a girlfriend. Or a horse. The actual football is good fun to play, very Sensible Soccer but with a little arrow making shooting and passing satisfying and predictable and while it isn't exactly realistic it does play a cracking game. The true

brilliance lies in how the game all comes together - training makes a difference, getting drunk makes you stumble around the pitch and so on. It makes it compelling and hugely involving - a football fan probably can't spend a better £13. And considering it was made by one bloke, that's even more impressive.

Andrew Revell



"FINALLY SOMEONE HAS REALISED THAT IT WOULD ACTUALLY BE FUN TO PLAY AS A SINGLE MEMBER OF A TEAM!"



GOTTLIEB PINBALL CLASSICS

(PSP)

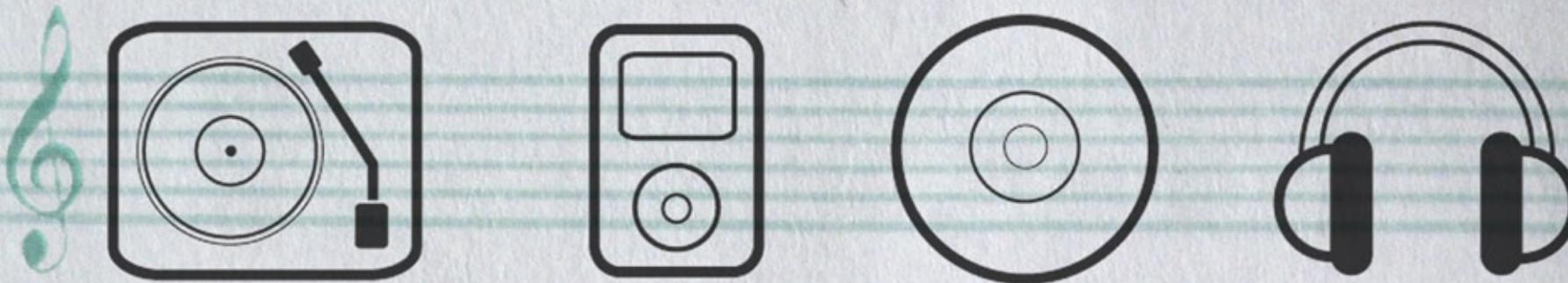
With only one company in the world now producing machines, pinball is pretty much dead. So it's a breath of fresh air to discover Gottlieb Pinball Classics, with its digital recreations of eleven classic pinball machines from several different decades. It's brilliantly realised, with fantastic graphics and sounds recreating the garishly decorated tables in scarily accurate detail. Seeing as these tables are decades old in many cases, this is likely the only chance that gamers will get to ever play them again – and it's as close to the real thing as

possible. This is a must have title for fans of real life pinball, as each table is accompanied by historical information and flyers, adding to the appeal for those starved of silver ball action in recent years. The excellent physics and a choice of horizontal or vertical view modes round out a title that is perfect for portable gaming

Jason M. Brown



"FANTASTIC GRAPHICS AND SOUNDS RECREATE THE GARISHLY DECORATED TABLES IN SCARILY ACCURATE DETAIL."



music

currently listening to...

festivals / mogwai / the new emo / bunch of myspace stuff / royksopp / giant drag / fabric live





FESTIVALS

THE SUMMER IS COMING, BRINGING COWS,
PORTALOOS AND GREAT MUSIC

WORDS: IAN MORENO-MELGAR

DESIGN: ANDREW REVELL

For this article it is necessary to break out of the magazine's writing guidelines and get a little personal. Not uneasily though, so allay those fears. I love festivals; in fact, my summer is normally scheduled around them. This year though, things have gotten ridiculous. With Glastonbury taking a break this year, it was inevitable that other festivals would sell out quickly, but all of the main events are long sold out, leaving many disappointed. But don't panic. There are literally hundreds of festivals across Europe, so I've decided to hunt down and point out some of the lesser-known festivals and offer a very brief choice in the hope that you might like the sound of something.

Ladies and gentlemen; it's a Disposable Festival Recommendation.



In terms of eclectic, you'd be hard pushed to match Bestival, *Rob Da Bank's* own 'Boutique Festival'. (bestival.net) Pick of the line up is *Erol Alkan* (even though he is everywhere, all of the time), *DJ Yoda*, *Mum* doing a DJ set, *Jamie T*, *Devendra Banhart* and the *Pet Shop Boys*.

If you want something truly 'indie', then give the *Barnsley Original music Festival* some attention. Featuring a large mix of signed, local and unheard of bands, it's a great introduction into a thriving scene. myspace.com/bomfest

Equally as eclectic and chilled out but in the slightly less exciting location of *Leicester City Centre* is *Summer Sundae*. At £75 there is no reason not to go with *Elbow*, *Calexico*, *DJ Format*, *The Long Blondes*, *Coldcut* and *Plaid*. More at Summersundae.com

New this year is *The Great Escape*.

Taking place all over Brighton from 18-20 May, it's certainly one for those of you looking for a band to try and 'outcool' your mates. At £35 it's very cheap, but that doesn't include any accommodation. It's vital to attend if you live near however, especially to see the likes of *The Futureheads*, *This Et Al*, *65daysofstatic*, *Cooper Temple Clause* and *Jeniferever*.

IF YOU WANT SOMETHING TRULY 'INDIE' TRY BARNESLEY ORIGINAL MUSIC FESTIVAL

If you like your festivals to be all about trying something new then *Sonar* in *Barcelona* is clearly the best option. More of an arts festival than music, it is known for its strong electronica bias. For the sake of brevity, *DJ Shadow* is playing. Go browse at sonar.es/portal/eng/home.cfm

Back in the UK and something slightly

more leftfield with *Womad*. I'm not so great with 'World Music' knowledge, but I'm reliably informed this year's line up is superb. If the idea of *Nancy Griffith*, *Gotan Project*, *Femi Kuti* and *The Calypso All Stars* take your fancy why not go and check out <http://womad.org/> for more info.

For those of you with an appetite for bpm *Creamfields* is the only way to go. More of one massive day long party, this year's line up is a great mix of bands and DJs and *DJ Shadow* is playing. So go book at <http://www.cream.co.uk/creamfields/>

And finally, announced just last week, *Latitude*, a new festival from *Mean Fiddler* is

aiming to add an of sophistication to the 'mainstream' festival calendar. The most important of which is that *Mogwai* are playing, check www.latitudefestival.com

So then, where to go? Who to see? Well, the problem is there are far more festivals than this article can cope with, most of which are tiny but full of their own individual charm. My suggestion is to check out your local music press and see what's going on near you; there literally are festivals every day and for all types of tastes. I could never give you a definitive view, or an impartial view so instead my ultimate recommendation is to decide what you want from your festival experience and have a read around. But I'm off to *Summer Sundae* if you wanna buy me a beer.

THE NEW EMO

WORDS: IAN MORENO-MELGAR DESIGN: RACHEL WILD

FOR

Emo as we see it today is not Emo as it was conceived. Emo is a ridiculous concept in itself anyways. 'Emotive rock?' Any band worth its record deal has recorded a song which carries some aspect of emotion.

Consider the idea of the genre and realise that it has grown undoubtedly, its boundaries warped and distorted as people lazily apply it, but Emo used to be a byword for quality. Emotive rock, that is, intelligent, literate and candid emotive rock is a pleasure to experience. Listening to a singer distil his or her heart into a 4 minute pop song, his voice aching and straining to convey his every feeling is a painfully enjoyable experience. If these lyrics of heartbreak, lust and the youthful, naïve experiences of love are wrapped up in strong melodies, a memorable chord or four, then who's to begrudge the listener, or the band? For many, the genre carries a strong element of catharsis, something that not much music

does, seeking as music usually does, to entertain. True Emo as it is therefore, is a necessary and vital element of a wide spectrum of guitar music.

The popular bands that are typically banded about the genre today are popular for a reason and while the manifesto might have been diluted, the ideology still exists. Panic! At the Disco are an excellent example presenting as they do, something different with their own frenetic take on the genre and its themes. What Panic! do so well though, is their ability to take universal themes of considerable weight and

LISTENING TO A SINGER DISTIL HIS OR HER HEART INTO A 4 MINUTE POP SONG IS A PAINFULLY ENJOYABLE EXPERIENCE.

mould them into quirky and memorable songs that had a large element of the tongue in cheek about them. It's all too easy to harangue this scene, but for all its problems it offers fun and in some instances some wonderfully carefree music.

AGAINST

Emo is the bastard creation of a musical genre turned bitter from a generation of kids fed up with Nirvana who instead seek identity not from their contemporaries, their parents or heaven forbid, themselves. Instead, whiny bastard kids are now wearing the same unnervingly tight clothes, listening to the

TO BE EMO YOU NEED A FALL OUT BOY CD AND A SHIT, OVERWORKED HAIRCUT ... IT'S ALL POSING AND SHOWMANSHIP.

same bands whine on about their girlfriend/ex-girlfriend/parents/the government to seek attention, mostly no doubt, from their parents who cannot possibly understand why their son has spent more money on hair care than porn. The bands who soundtrack these peoples lives mostly use spiky but friendly guitar work and incessant lyrics but seem to be the same 5 people just from slightly places. The music, shallow and whimpering, relies on the conventions of the genre in which it sits to

achieve its success; the rule of thumb here is to do exactly the same thing every one else is.

This bizarre identification is not the first time that a young generation has sought a mass identity to belong to, we've seen in Teddy Boys, Mods, Rockers etc. The Mods though, for example, were to be respected; you had to earn

your identification. To be Emo you need a Fall Out Boy CD and a shit, overworked haircut. It takes no skill or artistry, no talent or sense of integrity to write the songs these bands write. The music they create is without real emotion, no substance to it, it is all front, all posing and showmanship.

Emo as it stands, in its stupid studded belt, its leopard print socks and its fucking eye shadow is a bland and empty commercial product. It is boring and without merit, sucking as it does the individuality and life out of its followers and its musicians.

So goes the quote on 'Yes! I Am A Long Way From Home', the opening track from their debut LP, *Mogwai Young Team*. As relevant then as it is now, 9 years later, it's the most realised explanation of Mogwai, their sound and their intent one could possibly achieve. As the band release their 5th studio LP *Mr. Beast*, an album of stunning composition, of dense and layered intelligence, here's an all too brief rundown of the band.

For all the arrogance they convey in interviews and for every angry, snarling, response they elicit, Mogwai are tentatively delicate. At their most reserved and at their most tender, Mogwai produce music of a timeless beauty, shimmering and fragile, gentle waves and tiny sparks filling speakers with a refined grace that many seek. Mostly instrumental, the often abused 'post-rock' tag is frequently and lazily applied to the Mogwai sound as a simple way of describing music that, often guitar or piano based, finds its power in structure, building as it often does to a stunning conclusion, but to generalise Mogwai as harbingers of noise is to only understand one element of a complex and multi dimensional band dynamic. The reputation as a band who revels in volume was established with their first LP proper, *Mogwai Young Team* in 1997 and today the band continue to suggest a raw anger or pure volume to their work, with the latest LP being entitled as it is, *Mr. Beast*. But in reality, *Young Team* was never that noisy, '*Mogwai Fear Satan*' and '*Like Herod*' are the obvious examples of the noisier tracks, but the core of the album is made up of the slower, quieter moments and this is something that seems to have been overlooked, mostly because of the intense cacophony that Mogwai produce live. In fact, Mogwai are essentially two bands, firstly and most obviously a band who are angry and ferocious, often punishingly loud.



The second Mogwai is a complex band, multi faceted and immensely elusive. This Mogwai is a much, much quieter band, whose dynamic isn't based on quiet/loud, rather a more stirring nature, quiet guitar refrains that build slowly to often create moving epics. Closer listens reveal this side of Mogwai to be fully developed, and less of the 'secondary' side of the band that many consider. The brooding instrumentals that tend to be the basis for building on are a better example of what Mogwai do so effortlessly and so frequently. Tracks such as '*Tracy*', '*2 Rights Make 1 Wrong*' and *Auto Rock* are just a few tracks that highlight their ability to create stirring tracks of immense passion without the snarling volume.

For ten years, Mogwai have been carving out that their own niche as alternative rock pioneers, eschewing the obvious for a musical integrity and a technical craftsmanship that many would never consider, never mind attempt. Their very ideologies have lead Mogwai to become the definitive guitar iconoclasts, a by word for independence and musical veracity. But now, the Mogwai of today are ironically, as necessary and as vital as any band they've outlived or currently fight against. Mogwai today are their own creation, a living breathing Beast of many heads, a sign post for honesty an unwavering dedication for sheer virtuosity.

For a more detailed history, see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mogwai_%28band%29

WORDS: IAN MORENO-MELGAR
DESIGN: ANDREW CAMPBELL

ERM, COS THIS MUSIC CAN PUT A HUMAN BEING IN A TRANCE LIKE STATE AND DEPRIVE THEM OF THE SNEAKING FEELING OF EXISTING, COS MUSIC IS BIGGER THAN WORDS AND WIDER THAN PICTURES. ERM, IF SOMEONE SAID THAT MOGWAI IS... ARE THE STARS I WOULD NOT OBJECT. IF THE STARS HAD A SOUND, IT WOULD SOUND LIKE THIS:





Musical success is a process. People decide, either en masse or as a single executive what is going to make it from bedroom crafted demos to stuff you can buy while getting your milk from Tesco. This page is DM looking at the stuff at the bottom of the food chain, stuff either record companies or the artists themselves have sent. The only requirement is that they had to be willing to burn a CD and post it – if they don't think they're worth that much effort then we don't either. And if it lands on our doormat it gets onto this page.

Where to start? Well, we might as well start with the record company who sent stuff, *Tough Love Records*. A tiny company, having released only four singles so far, with the latest being "Gregory Lassoes the Moon" from art-rockers *Dead! Dead! Dead!* Art-Rock has a great defence when it comes to criticism; if it sounds rubbish it's being ironic. Despite an admirable level of technical proficiency, this just sounds that bit too much like an album track from *The Coral*. Success is much more likely for stable-mates *The Sequins* with their well structured *Razorlight* like guitar stuff. It might not be anything new but the people who will be

dancing around like twazzocks to it on 'Pound a Pint' night aren't really going to care about that, are they?

The rest are direct from the artists, via MySpace. Despite that, it's pretty emo free. In fact the only slightly dark stuff comes from *Obedientbone* with their EP 'Aware.' A good, but very disparate selection of tracks makes it difficult to pull together a clear picture of them unfortunately. Dark electronic-punk with female vocals with songs ranging from almost

whatever. *Kat Flint* was the last to end up on this page, scraping in at the last second with her first EP. It's an easy one to describe, witty lyrics, a lovely voice and songs you'll find yourself humming days after listening to the disc. Everything from relaxing "The Blinking" to the very almost pumping "Headrush" is curiously addictive. And 'Anti-Climax' which is the latest in an ever-growing list of songs I've fallen for and will love forever. I'll say nothing more.

This page is now a small part of the musical process offering readers a few people to check out. Even if we suddenly get inundated and can only offer a few words to each artist in the future it'll still be worthwhile if we point a couple of people in the

direction of something they love. It's what reviews are meant to do, after all and if it's a short review it just adds to that lovely feeling of discovery. From our point of view though, it's proved a point. This random selection has had no quality control applied and there isn't a single stinker, proving music really should be considered good until proven bad. The Internet makes finding that out a lot easier, levelling the playing field and capable of giving more artists the success they deserve.. Hopefully,

THE DOORMAT

NOW WE'RE FAMOUS, WE GET SENT STUFF. AND THIS IS WHERE WE TELL YOU ABOUT IT.

WORDS AND DESIGN: ANDREW REVELL

chill-out to quite hard and aggressive. Whatever, try out 'Tendril V' as a test track. 'Fat Benjamin' also sent an electro EP, although it provided a much neater snapshot of his style. He's almost certainly going to be pleased to have his original tracks described as soaring, pounding and occasionally epic. The remixes that open the album aren't quite as good though, unfortunately.

Is folk-pop a genre? It certainly is now,



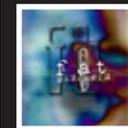
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ROYKSOPP
THE UNDERSTANDING

As with most "difficult second albums", producing a follow-up to *Melody AM* was always going to be a thankless task, and *The Understanding* does appear to fall short of the standards set by Röyksopp's first album. Some of the singing seems more unwelcome on certain tracks that would be better as instrumentals, and there are few tracks that become as memorable as *Melody AM*'s "In Space" or "Remind Me". However, like the first album, *The Understanding* is perfect background ambience; whilst individual songs seem so-so or

repetitive, as a collection it is very enjoyable to have playing whilst doing other things. As well as this, the album is very good in terms of accessibility, and it's a treat for those who haven't experienced *Melody AM*. The rest of us can enjoy it without paying too much attention to its low points, and let its high points satisfy our subconscious.

Dan Gassis



"THE ALBUM IS VERY GOOD IN TERMS OF ACCESSIBILITY, AND IT'S A TREAT FOR THOSE WHO HAVEN'T EXPERIENCED MELODY AM!"



FABRICLIVE 27
DJ FORMAT

The latest disc from London club Fabric's monthly compilation that alternate between two flavours, *Fabric* (house, techno etc.) and *FabricLive* (hip-hop, drum'n'bass etc.) Each is handled by a guest DJ, this month DJ Format. While they vary hugely in quality month to month, this is one of the best. You'd think compilations would be very individual things coming down to whether individual taste deciding how many tracks you'd like but the real decider is the balance and ability to hop around unfettered by genre and this does it with ease.

Hip-hop, jazz and soul all feature easily with a gorgeous transition into the Ella Fitzgerald version of "Sunshine of your Love" being the highest peak. Odd weak mixes let it down a little, but it's going to be a great disc to spin in the summer. Thankfully, it also cheers up dark rooms with knackered light fittings too.

Andrew Revell



"ODD WEAK MIXES LET IT DOWN A LITTLE, BUT IT'S GOING TO BE A GREAT DISC TO SPIN IN THE SUMMER!"



GIANT DRAG
HEARTS AND UNICORNS

Despite the title, there's nothing twee about this L.A. duo's debut offering; from front to back, it rocks with a post-grunge *Bloody Valentine* guitar and a jet-black sense of humour that ought to make the men in singer Annie Hardy's life scared stiff.

If the idea of a song called "Kevin is Gay" makes you smile, be glad it's as much fun to listen to; it also sets a standard that "Yflmð" ("You fuck like my dad") "My Dick Sux" and the irresistible "This isn't it" matches with aplomb.

Though the album loses focus once

things get melancholy, there's enormous potential besides that's just begging to be ripped out and carried across to whatever Annie and Micah come up with next. It almost makes you glad they didn't quite get it right first time.

Jamie Thomson



"IF THE IDEA OF A SONG CALLED "KEVIN IS GAY" MAKES YOU SMILE, BE GLAD IT'S AS MUCH FUN TO LISTEN TO"



YEAH YEAH YEAHS
SHOW YOUR BONES

Art rock royalty the Yeah Yeah Yeahs' second album is a much more muted affair than previous material. But no less worthy of a purchase because of it. Lead single *Gold Lion* is a useful indicator of the album's 'sound', with each song carrying the trademark Yeah Yeah Yeahs elements in a more refined manner. Zinner's guitar work is constantly stunning and Karen's vocals are a much more restrained instrument. This is an album of immense subtlety, the songs, and melodies, a varying mix of influences, a pleasing surprise. The album

peaks in the middle with a few diverse tracks that showcase how far their sound has come since their first EP, a manifesto for many bands since. Ultimately it struggles under the weight of expectation, though it provides the most pleasure when ignoring their previous work as a watermark. Not a classic then, but a clever evolution for a band probably too clever for our own good.

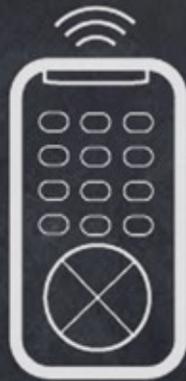
Ian Moreno-Melgar



"ZINNER'S GUITAR WORK IS CONSTANTLY STUNNING AND KAREN'S VOCALS ARE A MUCH MORE RESTRAINED INSTRUMENT!"

DIRECTOR

CAMERAMAN



film & tv

currently watching...

six feet under / silent hill / u-turn / walk the line / jarhead / syriana / munich



IN LOVING MEMORY...

WRITING A DRAMA ABOUT A FUNERAL HOME DOESN'T SOUND PARTICULARLY SEXY, REMARKABLE, OR EVEN MARKETABLE. BUT IN **SIX FEET UNDER**, ALAN BALL HAD A SHOW WHICH SIDESTEPED TYPICAL TV CLICHÉS AND FUSED TALENT WITH POETIC PROSE TO MAKE AMERICA FACE UP TO ITS BIGGEST FEAR – DEATH.

WORDS: KEITH ANDREW

DESIGN: ANDREW CAMPBELL



As Nathaniel Fisher Jr. stands watching people wander past in a ghostly fashion at the end of *Six Feet Under*'s pilot, he realises that in some manner, every one of them will cease to exist at some point. Everyone and everything ends. Moments before he had been running; a nice simple illustration often used throughout the series to signify that Nate was never really comfortable with his own being, or how his life had turned out.

But in this sense, and for these opening moments, his escape was the audience's escape. Just as Alan Ball's *American Beauty* had taken on the ridiculous notion that 'Middle America' (or middle anywhere, for that matter) was blissfully happy, *Six Feet Under*'s seemingly defining role was to present death to those same millions across the country. Often over dramatised, glamorised, or romanticised by Hollywood and the legions of television shows that idolise the silver screen, Ball allowed the Fisher family and their various assembled gathering of strangely familiar misfits to go through death, each week, in a perpetual variety of ways.

At the beginning of every episode, a mini epic ensued, with viewers being led one way and then the other, before finally the axe would fall. Sometimes someone the audience

knew, but more often than not a complete stranger. Yet, each death triggered a reaction from those watching, and not always the kind you'd expect. When a woman of faith saw floating blow-up sex dolls in the sky as angels calling from heaven and promptly got run over worshipping them, it was hard not to laugh. Equally so, Nate holding a man coughing and spluttering his way out of life screaming "Walk towards the light? There is no fucking light!" drew almost the exact opposite reaction, questioning as the show often did the validity of an afterlife.

Yet *Six Feet Under* managed to avoid coming down on any side in regards to what happens when we die. Conversely, despite the fact that death obviously lingered in the air at the Fisher & Diaz funeral home, Ball and his fellow writers and directors angled death in the show as a tool to highlight life's little (and indeed big) imperfections. The Fisher family – Ruth, her two sons Nate and David, and daughter Claire – encapsulated the show's essence of avoidance and denial. Painfully at odds with their own feelings, five years of *Six Feet* followed the unclichééd ups and downs of each and every one of them, learning to come to terms with their own fallibilities and the fallacious nature of the world around them. But as melancholy as that sounds, the writing of each episode was crafted to portray the strengths of life by hanging death over each and every line.

Nathaniel Fisher's (Senior) fatal accident in the opening minutes of the pilot episode served to illustrate that no-one in *Six Feet Under*'s world was safe from the Grim Reaper. This wasn't a series tied up in high profile signings



"INFINITE POSSIBILITIES AND ALL HE CAN DO IS WHINE. YOU CAN DO ANYTHING YOU LUCKY BASTARD. YOU'RE ALIVE! WHAT'S A LITTLE PAIN COMPARED TO THAT?"
– NATHANIEL FISHER, SR.

for cameo parts, or actors haggling for more money to return for another run. Anyone could die at any minute (partly necessitated by the fact that even when dead, characters would still appear regularly to set the mental cat among the pigeons) serving to exemplify the interminable importance of each moment that they, and indeed we, had left.

It's therefore easy to understand the crux of the *Six Feet* story – one that would end in a beautifully stunted manner. Returning home for his father's funeral, Nate gets caught up in the funeral home he ran away from; his father's demise ultimately spurring a change in direction for Nate, and a sudden desperation to be a good man.

Throughout its five seasons, Nate's determination to be seen to be always doing the right thing leads him on a trail of emotional plundering – one wrong move countered by another, despite good intentions. It's for similar purpose that his on/off other half, Brenda, strikes up a relationship with him. Saddled with antagonistic parents, Brenda too had previously been on the run from herself, diverting her minds eye by focusing on being a crutch for her mentally ill brother. On the surface, certainly a relationship of selfish convenience, hindered more so by Brenda's destructive sexual addiction.

Nevertheless, with apt casting



and a script eternally faithful to character, the wheels and cogs in *Six Feet*'s engine managed to convey that their relationship was actually built upon a raw, ceaseless and undeniably mortal attraction. Things didn't end happily ever after, nor did 'love conquer all, but the clique who wrote and directed all 63 episodes under Ball's guidance were loyal to their decision to let the drama be character driven, rather than chucking in an affair here or a car crash there for no one's benefit other than the ratings.

It's a distinction between *Six Feet* and the pretenders to the crown that allowed Nate and Brenda's 'love story' to be possibly one of the most gruelling but bona fide in TV history. It's no compliment to state that in terms of plot movement, entire *Six Feet* series could be covered in one single episode of



a show such as *Nip/Tuck*. A conscious decision to use film direction techniques rather than TV standard, coupled with proficient pacing meant every shot taken and every line spoken had a sincere meaning. Orchestrated entirely – there were no throw-away moments in its entire run.

Ball's TV legacy is not that he

awakened the American public to the prominence of death; rather, he stuck a big bold Post-It note on the importance of good drama. Perhaps in view of such dedication we should be dismayed that *Six Feet Under*'s baton of eminence over marketability and talent over pretty-young-things was yet to be picked by any dramas since, on either side of the Atlantic. Maybe the show's eulogy should be silenced until it has a worthy successor. Wake up, television. Everyone's waiting.

SURGERY

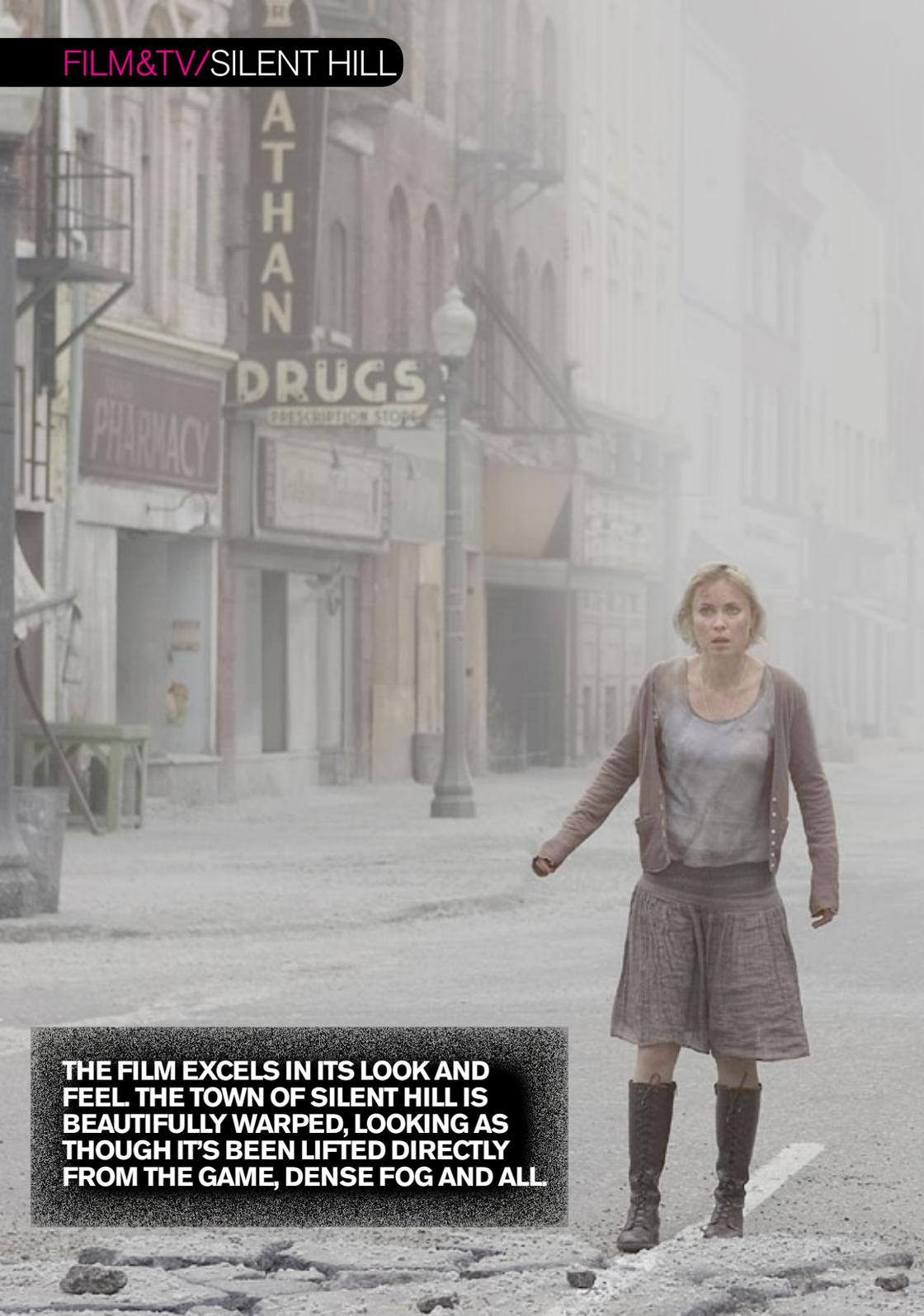


I FOUND MY THRILL ON
SILENT HILL

WORDS & DESIGN: ANDREW CAMPBELL

It's almost black as pitch. The musty air hangs with the stench of old meat. You gingerly make your way forward, desperately trying to make use of what little light is afforded to you. Shuffling shadows dart in and out of your peripheral vision, some giving off distant haunted moans, while others cackle like small possessed children. The floor beneath you is a soft, yet sticky mulch. Could it be the remnants of those that had the misfortune to come to this Hellish place before you? Your heart quickens, you take care not to stumble as who knows if you'll ever be able to get back up. Welcome to *Silent Hill*... and this is just the local cineplex where it's showing.

Yes, *Silent Hill* the movie is upon us. The latest in an increasingly growing number of game-to-movie adaptations, all with varying degrees of success but usually not bettering 'average'. However, in the case of *Silent Hill*,



THE FILM EXCELS IN ITS LOOK AND FEEL. THE TOWN OF SILENT HILL IS BEAUTIFULLY WARPED, LOOKING AS THOUGH IT'S BEEN LIFTED DIRECTLY FROM THE GAME, DENSE FOG AND ALL.

early signs pointed to a promising adaptation; a proven director (Christophe Gans), an Oscar winning screenwriter (Roger Avary) collaborating with one of the game's key stalwarts (game composer Akira Yamaoka). The initial promo stills captured the mood of the game perfectly and teaser trailers revealed that *that* music was being employed. All looking good. Easily one of, if not the truest adaptation of a game. Although is that necessarily a good thing?

Plotwise, the movie is loosely based on that of the first game, with the most notable alteration being the gender of the main character, giving the film a more maternal aspect than that of the game. A mother finds the disturbing behaviour of her adopted daughter worsening by the day and becomes drawn to the mysterious Silent Hill where answers might lie, much to the chagrin of her husband.

Silent Hill is an oddity in that it gets so much right yet manages to fail at the same time, a definite mixed bag. It treats its subject and the medium from which it originated with respect, but sometimes to the detriment of the movie itself. A large part of the acting is extremely wooden and stilted, just like in the games you might say. Was this intentional? It's hard to say for sure but doubtful. By all means stay true to the source but surely an adaptation should mean just that, to adapt appropriately to the medium? Last year's *Sin City*, while praised for its strict adherence to the comic was weighed down with cliched and downright awful dialogue. In places *Silent Hill* suffers the same fate, with real actors delivering dialogue that's more suited to CG created avatars. Rose Da Silva (Radha Mitchell) largely manages to pull off a performance that is Cheddar free but her husband and adopted daughter (Sean Bean and Jodelle Ferland respectively) aren't so lucky. Bean's American accent is laughable at times, wavering constantly and Ferland errs dangerously close to and eventually crosses the line of Annoying Child-Actor™.

Where the film does excel is in its look and feel. The town of Silent Hill itself is beautifully warped, looking as though it's been lifted directly

from the game, dense fog and all. Ramshackle shops line the barren streets, with many minor details echoing the game world. *Silent Hill* veterans will instantly recognise locales such as the iconic school and hospital, and you can't help but will Rose to visit the places you would were you playing the game. Special mention must go to the score which, while not necessarily composed by Yamaoka himself, takes enough cues from his original work for you to believe it was. Though some liberties have been made in terms of story – with characters across all the games making an appearance – the film works as a *Silent Hill* mash-up of sorts, taking a lot of the best bits from the series and blending them into one. This means the infamous Pyramid Head and 'sexy' staccato nurses of *Silent Hill 2* appear alongside disturbed Dahlia, leather clad cop Cybil and someone who looks suspiciously like Lisa Garland from the first game. While some fans may find issue with the use of someone like Pyramid Head being used in this particular story – many believe him to be the physical embodiment of the main character's guilt in the second game – there's no question that his inclusion works effectively, giving the film some of its most tense and chilling scenes, of which there are many. The fact that *Silent Hill's* storylines are usually open to interpretation lends itself to this, meaning old favourite Pyramid Head can now be seen as a general town executioner.

So is *Silent Hill* the best game-to-film adaptation? Undoubtedly. Is it a great adaptation in itself? Not entirely. Visually and aurally perfect, the clunky dialogue and stiff delivery stick in the brain and take away from the pleasure. A story that need not appear convoluted does so, and tries to make up for it with a ten minute exposition scene which sits uncomfortably amongst the drip feeding of plot that precedes it. Fans will take delight in a number of little nods to the source material – almost carbon copied camera moves, puzzles and map memorizing – and it's refreshing to have a contemporary horror movie that is actually horrific and for all the right reasons, unlike recent "horror" fare.



When given the opportunity to reflect on a film, it's all too easy to select something that already benefits from almost universal praise, adoration and respect (*Citizen Kane*, *The Godfather*, *Fellini's 8½*, *Lawrence Of Arabia*, *La Regle du jeu*, *Commando* et al). Films where buffs can get together, share favourite scenes, quote lines of dialogue and nod sagely as theories on subtext and hidden depths are aired. However, with this first in a line of film retrospectives in *Disposable Media*, what better podium for a look back on an underrated gem; to reflect on something cast aside for having the audacity not to adhere to audience's expectation of its director?

This reviewer can't help but feel baffled and bewildered by the reception given to Oliver Stone's *U-Turn* upon its 1997 release. Even fans of Stone found fault with the movie, proffering accusations of laziness, shallowness and ultimately labelling it with the dismissive 'style over substance' tag. What tosh.

While it's plain to see that *U-Turn* is a genre indulgence for Stone, it's one that we can all take pleasure from; Stone produces a cinematic cocktail, resulting in a contemporary western-noir thriller with a whisky chaser of black humour. Right from the get go, the tone is set with stylised kinetic visuals reminiscent of *Natural Born Killers*, as Bobby Cooper (Sean Penn) in his Mustang convertible rides into the town he'll soon desperately try to escape from. The jaunty sound of Peggy Lee's "*It's A Good Day*" is juxtaposed with on-screen credits that look as though they've been scratched into the film negative itself – it's obvious this isn't going to be a straight forward affair. As the car creates a dusty trail, Stone gives us a look at its surroundings using a variety of film stocks and time lapse photography, something he'll come

to rely upon throughout. Most noteworthy is the image of vultures tearing the flesh away from an unfortunate jackal – metaphorical foreshadowing, perhaps?

Living up to its film noir roots, *U-Turn* is awash with twists and double crosses so it would be churlish to reveal all here. What's immediately obvious though is that Bobby's bad luck – which starts with his car breaking down and leaving him stranded in the Hellish town – only gets worse, constantly spiraling downward until he's willing to do anything to escape, even if means murder. It's almost melancholic despite Bobby's unlikability. In a town this full of disgusting characters, it's hard not to root for him, or at least pity the poor fool. Why fool? How else to describe someone who cannot see that Grace, the sultry vixen he meets (Jennifer Lopez, pre J-Lo thankfully) is the femme fatale of this piece and will of course only land him in a world of trouble, as is their nature?

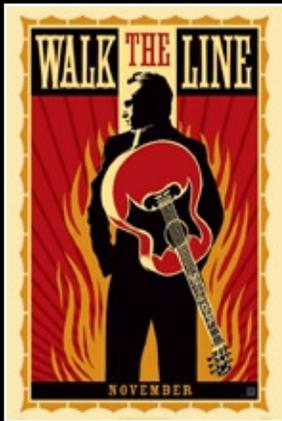
Grace is one of many supremely messed up characters Bobby encounters. First up is Darrell (Billy Bob Thornton), an almost literal grease monkey, the hillbilly mechanic from Hell, who seems to take delight in his hold over Bobby. Up next, Grace's grizzly bear-like husband, Jake (Nick Nolte), strong contender for 'Most Disturbed Redneck'. Even the town's Sheriff, played by Powers Boothe, is dubious. My personal favourite though is Joaquin Phoenix's pathetic bully, Toby N. Tucker (ingeniously nicknamed 'TNT' – "I'm just like dynamite. And when I go off, somebody gets hurt!").

The whiplash style may not be to everyone's taste and some may find the substance slight – Stone makes no bones about allegorising the rape of Native American land – but there's no denying there's plenty in *U-Turn* to praise, adore and respect.

U TURN

**SEX.
MURDER.
BETRAYAL.
BUT WHERE'S
THE LOVE?**

**WORDS & DESIGN:
ANDREW CAMPBELL**



WALK THE LINE
(12A)

//director:
james mangold

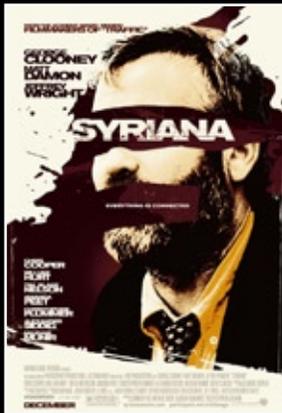
Straight to the point here, Joaquin Phoenix and Reese Witherspoon give career defining performances. Focused, attentive, full of subtlety, flair and respect, the two leads treat their subject matter with the reverence deserved and make the film something to treasure. The film focuses on Johnny Cash's early success, downfall and resurrection with a well worked in back-story of Cash's childhood and the death of his younger brother. It also centres on the relationship between Cash and June Carter, the film ending with their engagement

"STRAIGHT TO THE POINT HERE, JOAQUIN PHOENIX AND REESE WITHERSPOON GIVE CAREER DEFINING PERFORMANCES!"

Ian Moreno-Melgar



highlighting her importance in his life. The musical scenes are spectacular; camera work and editing helping to create the sense of rhythm that marked Cash's music out with some incredible sets and costumes that truly represent who Cash was and what his life entailed. As entertaining and as gripping as anything else released this year, *Walk The Line* is worthy of some Oscar success.



SYRIANA
(15)

//director:
stephen gaghan

From the writer of *Traffic* comes *Syriana*, another political drama and much like its forebear it features a multi-faceted plot, which allows for no central character other than the topic itself, the oil industry. Whilst Gorgeous George may have snagged the Oscar as an aging CIA agent, the rest of the cast shouldn't be overlooked as they all deliver sterling performances. So much so, that you're left thinking there may have been a plot thread too many as a number of character issues are left disappointingly unresolved. A more focussed narrative would have

"GORGEIOUS GEORGE MAY HAVE SNAGGED THE OSCAR, BUT THE WHOLE CAST ALL DELIVER STERLING PERFORMANCES!"

Andrew Campbell



undoubtedly benefited, especially as there are no real revelations in terms of the politics that go hand in hand with the oil trade; will any viewer really be surprised to learn that it's power, greed and corruption that governs it? However *Syriana* is not about resolutions and instead offers a snapshot of an industry that affects everyone.



JARHEAD
(15)

//director:
sam mendes

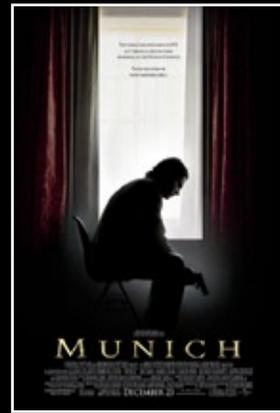
Jarhead is a beautiful film. The cinematography is worth the admission price alone as oil fires light up the screen, desert lays before you and the sun burns down, seemingly causing a heat haze at the front of the cinema. Fortunately the film is not all glamour without content, carrying as it does a serious contemporary political message at the heart of the film, one which never feels intrusive or without too distant to matter. The real life account of Gulf War veteran Anthony Swofford is handled with a machismo and an assured

"THE CINEMATOGRAPHY IS WORTH THE ADMISSION PRICE ALONE AS OIL FIRES LIGHT UP THE SCREEN"

Ian Moreno-Melgar



confidence by Sam Mendes as he directs a film that is focused almost solely on the study of characters and their reaction to their change in fortunes. Without real action the story is a little protracted but fine performances, notably by ever superb Jamie Foxx, makes the film feel suitably alive and with emotion.



MUNICH
(15)

//director:
steven spielberg

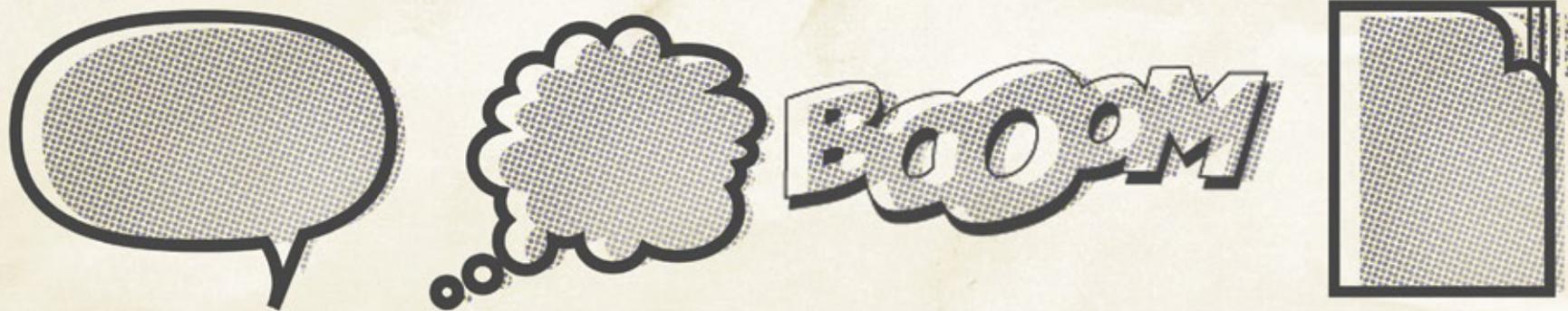
Let's not delay – *Munich* is good. But just how good depends on what the audience is expecting to see. The Spielberg emotional back-story is here, but in the grand scheme of things, just doesn't seem very important. *Munich's* short-cut nature puts pay to it and instead set up a film of glorious contradictions. Each potential murder scene is beautifully presented with chic panning shots and overtly seventies-style-zooms – Bana himself notably handsome for a mass murderer, but the film never shies away from the fact that mass killing is bloody, and

"MANAGES TO ILLUSTRATE WITH GREAT CARE WHY THE ARAB-ISRAELI CONFLICT IS ETERNAL, YET ULTIMATELY FUTILE"

Keith Andrew



ultimately revolting. To its credit, *Munich* manages to illustrate with great care why the Arab-Israeli conflict is eternal, yet at the same time ultimately futile. Even political virgins are offered a valuable insight into the honourable yet sordid nature of secret slaughter on hidden fronts. *Munich* is a postcard from the human race – an utterly disheartening one, but entirely watchable nonetheless.



comics

currently reading...

marvel's ultimate line / scott pilgrim / marvel monsters / legion of superheroes / fell / wonder woman



ULTIMATELY MARVELOUS

SUPER-HERO COMICS FEATURE COMPLICATION AND CONFUSION MORE THAN THEY FEATURE SPANDEX, BUT WITH THE ULTIMATE LINE MARVEL IS TRYING TO MAKE THINGS BETTER.

WORDS: ANDREW REVELL **DESIGN:** ANDREW CAMPBELL

Forty years of web-slinging, hulk smashing and villain thwarting has made the Marvel universe a very complicated place. Remnants of stories are littered everywhere making it difficult for new readers to know where to start. In 2001, Marvel decided on a new idea to try and tempt new readers in with the creation of an entirely new universe, no relation to the current one but with huge similarities. Great characters, great stories and none of the complication. As well as more considered approaches to explaining things, like the X-Men wearing costumes to hide their mutant genes. Five years after the line launched and it is still a brilliant idea.

From the initial reaction it got though you'd think Marvel had invaded a nation for its oil. People complained that Marvel was planning on killing off the main universe and replacing it. They complained if the stories were too similar to the originals and they complained if Marvel changed anything. They complained

about the quality of early titles *Ultimate Adventures* and *Ultimate Daredevil* and *Elektra*, claiming they were rushed, cynical cash-ins on the new line. A mixture of valid and reactionary complaints but they all seem to have been taken on board since the launch with Marvel now seemingly realising the importance of the line as a showcase for comics as well as Marvel.

For new readers, the best starting point has to be *The Ultimates*, equivalent of *The Avengers* and including all the big-name super-heroes like Thor, Captain America and Iron Man. It's had schedule problems which seem to be sorting themselves out, but it's always worth the wait. The art, in particular, is both brilliant and perfectly suited to the tone of the comic. *The Ultimates* isn't an adult comic like those on the DC Vertigo line, but it certainly isn't one scared to talk about "issues" and will show people bleeding and dying whenever necessary. It never gets too bogged down in real-life though and is happy to show



THE ULTIMATES ISN'T AN ADULT COMIC LIKE THOSE ON THE DC VERTIGO LINE, BUT IT CERTAINLY ISN'T ONE SCARED TO TALK ABOUT "ISSUES"

super-powered folk wearing bright costumes, even if they do make dubious actions, often with a hint of conspiracy. More importantly though it helps people have conversations about which hero could beat which and also provides big-budget blockbuster entertainment by the bucketload.

If *The Ultimates* pushes towards the adult end of the market, *Ultimate X-Men* and *Ultimate Spider-Man* are both aimed at younger audiences, the same teenagers that originally bought *Amazing Spider-Man* comics. Times have changed though, teenagers now have different concerns and interests and they want them on paper. They're bright enough to realise that Peter Parker would have hell keeping his identity secret and they understand his hormones rushing when around girls. And they certainly aren't surprised he gets bullied for being a nerd. It's clear that writer Brian Michael Bendis knows this and is in his element month after month, using flowing dialogue to create and develop a hugely believable cast of characters as well as the required action for Spidey to

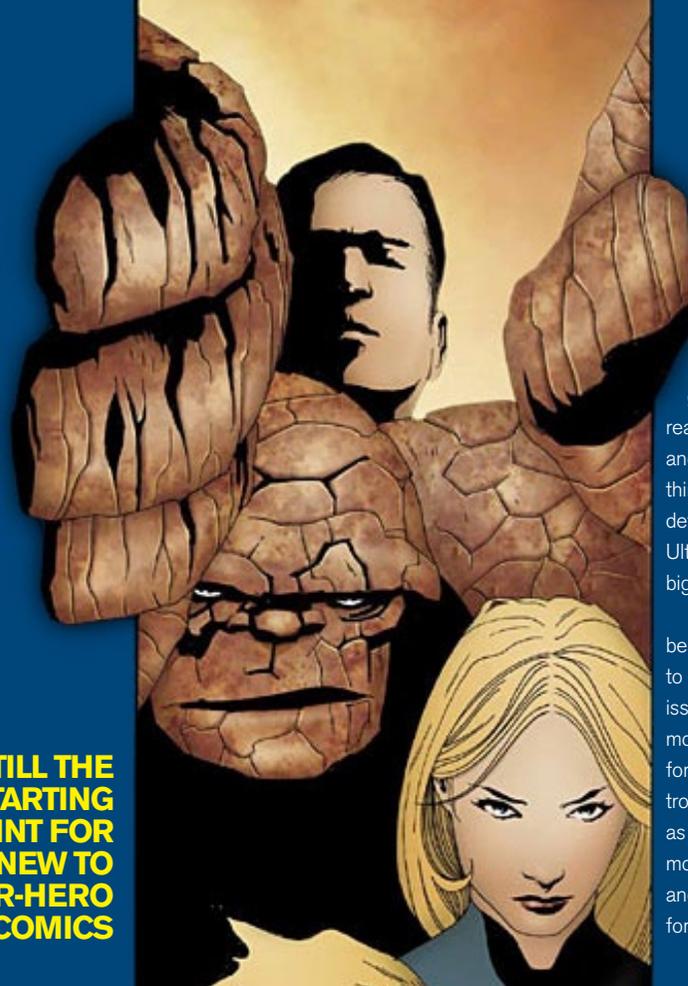
quip about. The careful balance between the two is what makes the title good enough to be approaching its hundredth issue.

Ultimate X-Men does what *X-Men* comics have always done, serving as a metaphor for all forms of irrational hatred but never giving a specific agenda. That means characters of varying ethnic origin and a major male character developing a crush on Wolverine are side stories, never getting in the way of the fighting. The dialogue and banter might not be up to the standards of *Ultimate Spider-Man* but they're not too far off. It's found its niche and it works it well, unlike the latest ongoing title *Fantastic Four* which despite a great start and perfect origin explanation has ended up with Reed seemingly able to engineer a machine capable of solving any problem, making everything seem a bit pointless. It does have a few good moments though and it's far from terrible.

In fact, that same conclusion can be drawn about the various mini-series as well. The Gah-Lak-Tus trilogy ongoing at the moment has never felt like a confident piece of

storytelling, more that someone felt it should be converted to the Ultimate universe. It's far from clear when it is set too, seemingly at some random point in the future of the on-going titles since it doesn't really fit with them. Marvel will try and explain it but if that sort of thing continues it could start to detract from the attraction of the Ultimate Universe, which is the biggest long-term worry.

For now though, it's still the best starting point for people new to super-hero comics. Back issues are easy to get hold of, most available in lovely hardback form. There have been peaks and troughs in each of the titles, but as a whole they are some of the most entertaining comics in years and here's hoping they continue for a longtime yet.



IT'S STILL THE BEST STARTING POINT FOR PEOPLE NEW TO SUPER-HERO COMICS

THE BEST MOMENTS...



ULTIMATE SPIDER-MAN

Issue 27 sums up *Ultimate Spider-Man*. While in class, Peter sees the news showing a man in a rhino suit rampaging through New York. Of course he dashes out, but gets delayed. Then delayed again. And again and again. It seems secret identities mean one thing - chit chat.



THE ULTIMATES

There's only one thing worse than wife beaters - super powered wife-beaters. The drunken, arrogant slimeball of a character Giant Man however gets taught a lesson when being asked, nay begged, by Captain America to grow to giant size so Cap can take him down properly. Giant Man is promptly brought back down to earth... with a few bumps.



ULTIMATE X-MEN

Early on - the first major fight scene. Cyclops asks Storm to use her powers, but she says she can't - he tells her to again and she takes out a couple of Sentinels perfectly. Cyclops goes to congratulate her but finds her passed out. Being a mutant isn't easy...



ULTIMATE FANTASTIC FOUR

Another one early on, just after the accident that gives them their powers the Fantastic Four are split up. And then a truck drives into Ben - suffice to say everyone is as surprised as each other when the truck hits him and flips over. That's one way to find out you're super-powered...

PILGRIM'S PROGRESS

"SCOTT PILGRIM IS AWESOME."

WELL IF IT'S GOOD ENOUGH TO START OFF AN EPIC TALE OF LOVE, MUSIC, FIGHTING AND VIDEO GAMES, THEN IT'S CERTAINLY A GOOD INTRODUCTION TO ALL THE MANY REASONS WHY YOU SHOULD BE READING BRYAN LEE O'MALLEY'S SERIES OF GRAPHIC NOVELS STARRING OUR EPHONYMOUS HERO. WITH SCOTT PILGRIM'S PRECIOUS LITTLE LIFE AND ITS SEQUEL, SCOTT PILGRIM VS. THE WORLD, OUT ALREADY, AND VOLUME 3 ON ITS WAY IN THE COMING WEEKS, NOW IS A GREAT TIME TO GET ACQUAINTED WITH HIS UNIQUE LITTLE WORLD AND THE CHARACTERS THAT INHABIT IT.

WORDS & DESIGN: RACHEL WILD

Scott Pilgrim is 23 years old, in between jobs, just got a new girlfriend but still getting over the last one, lives in Toronto, sharing a tiny bedsit with his gay friend Wallace and like all good Canadian boys, is in a cool band too. 'The Sex Bob-ombs' give away Scott's penchant for video games, and introduce us to his other friends, 'the talent' Stephen Stills and drummer (but possibly more) Kim Pine. The ties to music and games don't end there though, at band practice you can play along to their not-quite-a-hit

Launchpad McQuack with the provided chord diagrams and lyrics, and Scott's mastery of Street Fighter comes in quite handy when his practical fighting skills are put to the test in various damsel-rescuing and evil-bashing situations throughout the books.

These books know they are comics and are not afraid to use the medium to its full advantage, in a time where a lot of titles are little more than glorified movie storyboards. They don't take themselves seriously, even though there are serious emotional themes present underneath the self-deprecating humour. Captions and

often unconventional sound effects are used skilfully to provide the reader with all the information they need, and more, to know and feel exactly what's going on. This helps, since although O'Malley's artwork is distinctive and really cool, the inherent nature of black-and-white comic strips can sometimes leave you guessing at who is who. Don't let this put you off though, as the close up shots and subtle shading prove just as gorgeous as any full colour art with a heap of cleverly laid-out storytelling to boot.

At its heart this is a modern love story, basic boy-meets-girl yet full of all

**- ARE WE AN ITEM?
- I'M SORRY, WHAT?**



the entanglements and post-teen angst that you've come to expect in our era of sit-coms and rom-coms – funny but all too painfully true at times. That, and the fact that its publisher, Oni Press, better known for bringing shoujo manga to the West, goes some way to explain Scott Pilgrim's success with the ladies, with the trade paperback buying public as much as on paper. It's one of the best ways in for romantic and sensitive types, or anyone who is new to reading comics, to discover the wealth of diversity present outside of the mainstream superhero books. On the other hand, there's enough action, video game references and wannabe supervillains in the guise of Ramona's evil ex-boyfriends to keep the more 'traditional' comics fan happy too. It's billed as Comedy/Action/Romance but only by personal recommendation would you realise how clever, grown up and laugh-out-loud funny it is at the same time. Buy it, read it and be prepared to personally recommend and lend it to all your friends when you've finished, whether they read comics or not.

Scott Pilgrim & the Infinite Sadness (Vol.3) is due out anytime now. Check radiomaru.com for news and free previews. of all 3 books.

“I’M THE **BEST**
AT WHAT I DO.
BUT WHAT I DO **BEST**
ISN’T VERY **NICE**”

WORDS: DANNY BADGER DESIGN: ANDREW CAMPBELL

I’ve read and collected comics for more than 20 years. It began with the *Beano* and *Dandy*, moved through *Commando* war stories, and reached the joys of Marvel and DC pretty early on, with mysterious early ‘80s adverts for Sea Monkeys, X-Ray Specs and Twinkies.

Over the years I’ve made mistakes, but I’ve also discovered stories that have stayed with me for years. It’s sacrilegious, but my favourite

comics don’t even get plastic bagged for safety, because some stories shouldn’t get packed away.

One of the high points in comic history for me was the late 1980s when the industry started catering

to adults for the first time. As a young teenager I appreciated the more mature story lines and issues.

Considering my first choice for an essential comic involves Frank Miller, most would expect *The Dark Knight Returns*, the influence for Batman comics and films since, in addition to hundreds of other comics. But

my first look is at a far more traditional reworking of another major player, and this one comes from the Marvel side of the tracks.

Since his introduction in 1974, Wolverine was a pint-sized hell raiser with a hair trigger temper. That concept worked well in an ensemble cast like the X-Men, but when legendary writer Chris Claremont attempted to enlist Miller as an artist, he explained for his solo series, the character of Wolverine needed more depth, and he had the perfect idea.

The concept of the failed samurai was perfect for Logan. His moral sensibility couldn’t be based on religion or altruism. But the loyal retainer who valued warrior honour and loyalty above all else was the missing depth the character sorely needed. But for the samurai to be revealed, Claremont had to first destroy the current Wolverine, in order to rebuild him. The story starts with his lover, Michiko, returning home to Japan in mysterious circumstances. Unsurprisingly, Wolverine’s on the next flight to Tokyo, only to discover that Michiko’s father has returned from the dead. During his absence, he incurred a debt that was repaid by Michiko’s hand in marriage. Up against Japanese clans and their codes of honour, Wolverine can’t even win a sword fight.

What follows is Logan falling to his lowest point. His mental and emotional state leads him to become entangled with an assassin and involved in betrayal, until finally the death of an old friend triggers his recovery.

Released in 1987, it’s still readily available as a trade paperback. And over almost 20 years, it hasn’t lost any power.

Claremont’s writing manages to keep a fast pace, even during the most introspective moments. And Miller’s contributions to both art and dialogue fit the tone of the book, serving the story without overshadowing it. There was some criticism that Wolverine was now too rational and thoughtful, but surely the most fearsome warrior is one that knows himself to be a warrior?





MARVEL MONSTERS TPB (MARVEL)
eric powell & various

Marvel's 2005 Halloween event was *Marvel Monsters*: four one-issue pastiches of classic Marvel monster comics from a more innocent and seemingly more paranoid age. Included in the hardcover edition are several reprints of these comics, which seem to take themselves far too seriously and consequently end up being unintentionally hilarious – much like the straight-faced, deadly serious monster movies of the 1950s. The 2005 *Marvel Monsters* comics are superbly campy homages that are consistently well written and drawn

in bright, satisfyingly bold and striking colours. Each one comes with a gorgeous cover by Eric Powell (who also illustrates the first comic in the collection – *Devil Dinosaur* #1, featuring a colossal battle between the eponymous dinosaur and the Incredible Hulk). *Marvel Monsters* is an excellent read for those of us raised on the lurid imagery of 1950s B-Movie paranoia, a fantastic collection of comics that aren't afraid to have fun.

Jason M. Brown



“AN EXCELLENT READ FOR THOSE OF US RAISED ON THE LURID IMAGERY OF 1950s B-MOVIE PARANOIA”



FELL (IMAGE)

warren ellis & ben templesmith

Another title from one of comic's most ubiquitous writers, *Fell* wears its battered and sombre heart on its sleeve and wastes no time at all in showing it; the first panel of issue one opens with a Post-It note which simply reads “My new Home. I think maybe a lot of people killed themselves here.” *Fell* depicts the story of Richard Fell, a perceptive police detective who has recently transferred to Snowtown, a true cesspit of a town that puts Sin City to shame. Each self-contained story is tightly written by Ellis, with not a line of prose

wasted and Templesmith's scratchy artwork echoes this efficiency, with minimal detailed backgrounds. Most notable is the complete lack of obtrusive adverts usually found in mainstream comics, giving you an uninterrupted, well crafted sixteen page story. An excellent example of how much character can be developed in such a small package.

Andrew Campbell



“AN EXCELLENT EXAMPLE OF HOW MUCH CHARACTER CAN BE DEVELOPED IN SUCH A SMALL PACKAGE”



LEGION OF SUPERHEROES #15 (DC)
stuart moore, mark waid & pat olliffe

Now just over a year into the *Legion's* latest reboot, this issue sees the 31st century teens getting back to their roots, both in flashbacks establishing the new official version of their past exploits, but also starting to re-connect with the mainstream DCU continuity and the famous heroes who inspired the team's origin. The crises, both past and present finally reach even the far flung United Planets, but unfortunately the backlog, lack of core cast members and change in creative team seems to burden the main story. The expanded letters



“THE BACKLOG, LACK OF CORE CAST MEMBERS AND CHANGE IN CREATIVE TEAM SEEMS TO BURDEN THE MAIN STORY”



WONDER WOMAN #226 (DC)
greg rucka & cliff richards

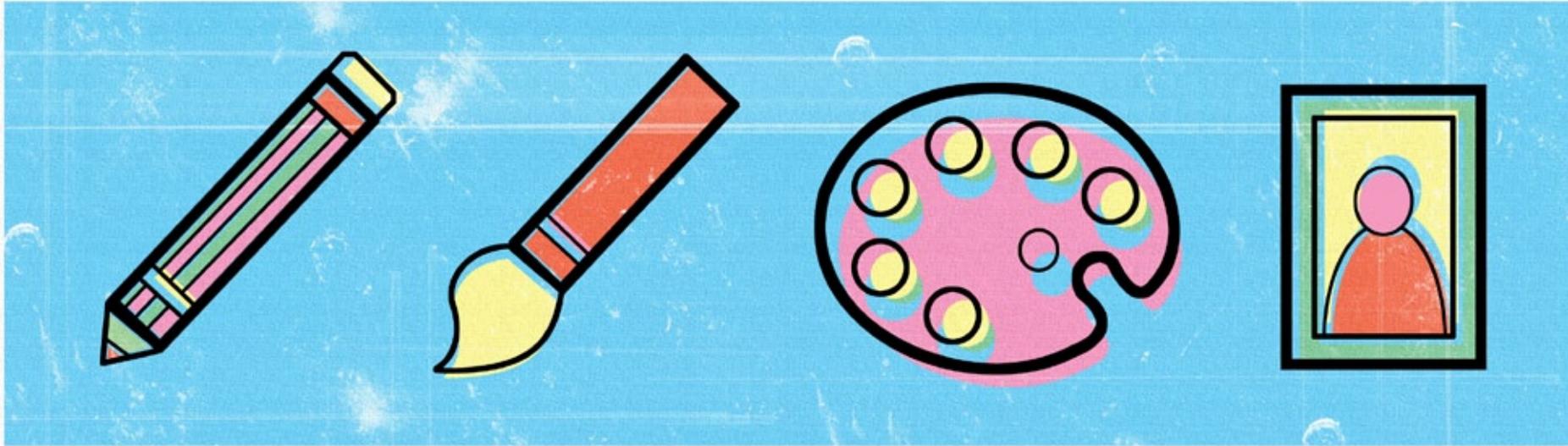
From the back of recent DC comics “*Infinite Crisis* will change everything” which obviously means some things are going to get worse. *Wonder Woman* has been a fantastic title, crossing Ally McBeal with Greek Mythology and traditional superhero stuff. Book launches handled by civil servants, trips into hell organised by feuding gods and a scrap with Batman. Plus, any title with a Minotaur doing the catering is worth the money. #226 looks back at the last few major events and Wonder Woman's relationship with Superman. She's

never had a role as big as in *Infinite Crisis* where she's the catalyst for everything and that makes this comic seem a bit tame, although enjoyable and good looking. If you've not been reading *Wonder Woman* pick it up from the start of Greg Rucka's run, it's been a fantastic title that didn't deserve this sudden ending. It will be sorely missed.

Andrew Revell



“A FANTASTIC TITLE, CROSSING ALLY MCBEAL WITH GREEK MYTHOLOGY AND TRADITIONAL SUPERHERO STUFF”



gallery

welcome to the disposable media gallery...

here at DM we believe in good art. every issue we aim to bring you the best / tofu / jonathan lancaster / steve pick



tofu



WHAT:
WHO:

'SANTA'S GHETTO'
TOFU

DM4/GALLERY

Jonathan Lancaster



CARNIVAL

WHAT:
WHO:
WHERE:

'CARNIVAL'
JONATHAN LANCASTER
JONATHANLANCASTER.CO.UK/

steve pick



WHAT:
WHO:
WHERE:

'TOM NOOK WILL RULE US ALL!'
STEVE PICK
WWW.HORNYDOG.CO.UK/

DM4/AND FINALLY...

Thai Teriyaki Rice

Light Bites 50

This recipe serves two and is a Thai spin on the Japanese classic - Teriyaki - served on a bed of spicy rice. I prefer to use brown - it takes longer to cook but is less starchy and really absorbs all those fabulous flavours.

Many of the dishes are based on the classic combination of lime, chillies and garlic with the unique savoury tang of Nam Pla (Thai Fish Sauce). There's a myriad of possibilities that spring from this simple base. An excellent partner to just about any sea food, vegetable or meat, Thai cooking is surprisingly healthy, quick and easy. Some of the principle ingredients used, such as lime juice and papaya are excellent tenderisers of meat. They make lamb or beef simply melt in your mouth. Adjust the amount of garlic and chilli to your taste. Remember - a recipe is a set of guidelines, not rules.

- 1/2 lb (225g) good sirloin steak
- 2 cupfuls brown rice
- Handful toasted sesame seeds

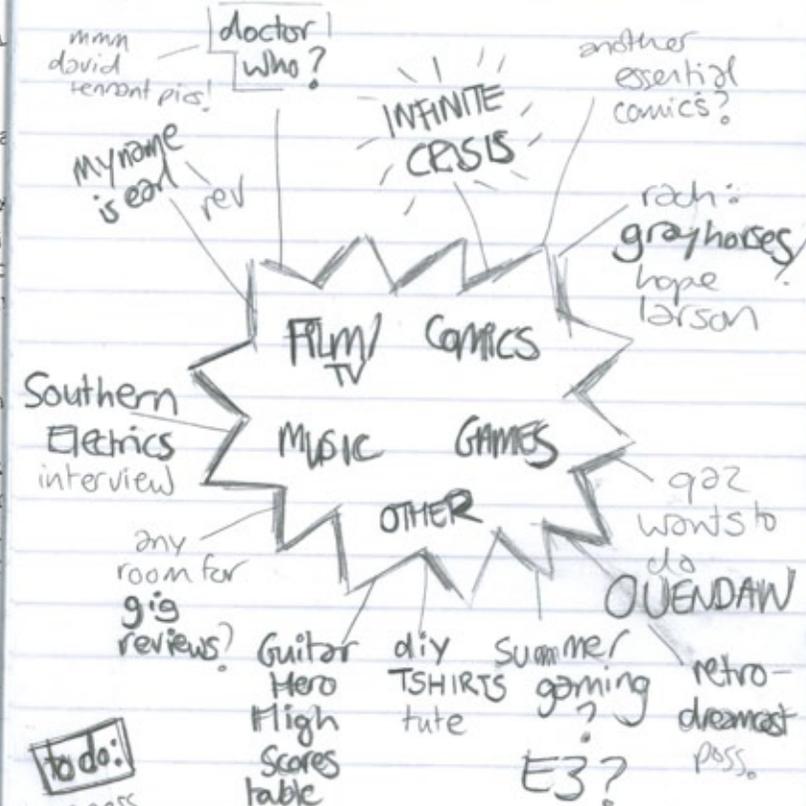
- For the rice dressing:**
- 4 spring onions finely chopped
 - 2 tbsp Nam Pla
 - 2 tbsp rice vinegar
 - 1 clove garlic finely chopped
 - 1 chilli deseeded and chopped

- For the marinade:**
- 1 stalk lemongrass chopped (the grated rind of a lime is an excellent substitute)
 - 3 cloves garlic chopped
 - 1 red and 1 green chilli - deseeded and chopped
 - 2 tbsp Nam Pla
 - Juice and flesh of 2 limes
 - 1 tsp Sesame oil

- 1) Chop and mix the marinade ingredients. Don't worry about the strong smell of the sesame oil - it will mellow with the cooking. Place the beef in the marinade, preferably overnight although if you're stuck for time an hour will do.
- 2) Take your steak out of the marinade, roll in the sesame seeds and then place under an extremely hot grill and cook on both sides for no more than a minute or two. You want them pink, juicy and succulent. Place to stand on one side so they retain those lovely juices while you prepare the rice's dressing. Simply chop the spring onions and mix everything together.
- 3) Drain your rice (if you're using brown I find despite what it says on the packet it'll need 50 minutes) and then thoroughly stir in your dressing.
- 4) Slice the beef into 1/2 inch thick strips and serve on the rice. Garnish with a little fresh Coriander. Tender, spicy goodness.

- Tips to remember:**
- Have your steak pink
 - Let it stand
 - Toast those sesame seeds

DM5 - next issue ideas



to do!

- business cards
- Promotion ideas
- website revamp

when are we aiming to publish?
ASAP

#022

RECIPE: MARK ORMEROD

COMPLEXITY

NINTENDO DS